

Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry

Centre for East Asian Research
McGill University

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Volume 3

Grace S. Fong, Editor

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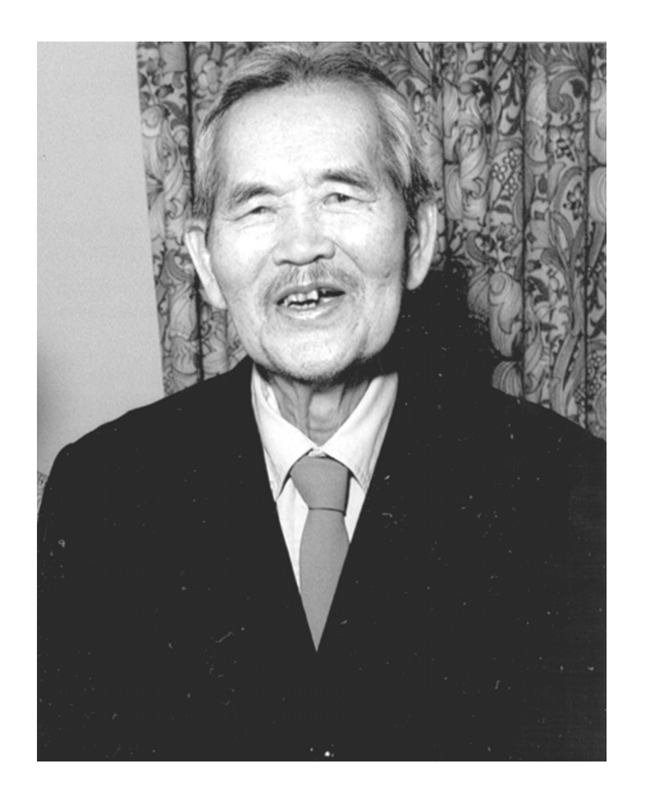
Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry
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Endowed by

Professor Paul Stanislaus Hsiang (1915-2000)



Editor's Note

Since the publication of Volume 2 of the *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry,* the lecture series endowed by the late Professor Paul Hsiang has continued with presentations by the following distinguished scholars: Professor Nanxiu Qian, "Poetic Reform amidst Political Reform: The Late Qing Woman Poet Xue Shaohui (1866-1911);" Professor Stephen Owen, "Eagle-shooting Heroes and Wild-goose Hunters: The Late Tang Moment;" Professor Kathleen Ryor, "Sensual Desires and Bodily Deprivations: Physicality in Xu Wei's (1521-1593) Flower Paintings and Poetry;" Professor Longxi Zhang, "History, Poetry, and the Question of Fictionality;" and Professor Zong-qi Cai, "*Yijing* Cosmology and the Regulated Verse Form (*Lüshi*)."

This volume includes the lectures presented by Professors Nanxiu Qian, Stephen Owen, and Longxi Zhang. Professor Qian examines the gendered politics and poetics forged in the song lyrics and *shi* poems of the late Qing woman writer and reformer Xue Shaohui. Professor Owen demonstrates the significance—overlooked in later literary history—of a type of late Tang regulated verse, austere and crafted to the point of anonymity, for later generations of poets learning to master poetic composition. In his essay, Professor Zhang revisits the long-standing issue of "fictionality" in Chinese poetry. He brings into his discussion the "fictional" elements in Chinese historical writing and the "historical" dimension in Chinese poetic writing, arguing for a complementary relationship between these two important genres.

Montreal, October 2005

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Poetic Reform amidst Political Reform: The Late Qing Woman Poet Xue Shaohui (1866-1911)*

Qian Nanxiu
Rice University

Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽 (1866-1911), courtesy name Xiuyu 秀玉 and styled Nansi 南姒, was an outstanding poet, writer, translator, and educator of the late Qing period. Although her name is yet unknown to modern historiography, her life experience and literary creation were closely related to the changes of late Qing society and the transformation of the Chinese elite.

Xue, her husband Chen Shoupeng 陳壽彭 (1857-ca.1928),[1] and Shoupeng's older brother Chen Jitong 陳季同 (1851-1907) were from gentry families in Minhou 閩侯 county (present-day Fuzhou 福州), Fujian province. All were well educated in the Chinese tradition, but the two Chen brothers also received a substantial amount of Western education at both the Fuzhou Naval Academy and in Europe. Through them, Xue Shaohui absorbed a good deal of fresh foreign knowledge.[2]

During the Reform Movement of 1898 and thereafter, Xue Shaohui, Chen Shoupeng, Chen Jitong, and Jitong's wife, a well-educated French woman, all played extremely important roles. Together, for example, they participated in a broadscale campaign for women's education. After the abrupt termination of the 1898 reforms, Xue and her husband began another collaboration, translating and compiling a number of Western literary, historical and scientific works, and editing newspapers.[3] In accordance with her reform activities, Xue, a prolific and highly regarded poet, produced during her rather short lifetime about 300 *shi* 詩 and 150 *ci* 詞 poems. With these poems, Xue literally chronicled the changes of China's reform era and modified traditional (male) literary forms to express the fresh ideas and sentiments arising during this period. In her works, she also recorded with insightfulness and candor her arguments with men, such as the then leading reformers, Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873-1929), often in a tit-for-tat fashion. Xue also launched arguments with her doting husband regarding issues such as the purpose and

methodology of their cooperative work; and he, for his part, did the same. Thus we have a rare and important set of documents with which to examine gender relationships of the reform era from a variety of angles.[4]

This paper discusses Xue's poetic achievements, focusing on the poetic viewpoints, thematic concerns, reform of forms, and self-presentation in her poems. Through this special study of Xue's case, I intend to examine the reform of poetics amidst the reform of politics as a coherent component of the self-transformation of late Qing intellectual women.

Xue Shaohui's Perspectives on Knowledge and Literary Creation

Although ultimately growing into an outstanding literary genius, Xue's beginnings were not promising. She was nearly abandoned by her parents after her birth, at which time the impoverished Xue family already had two daughters and one son. Xue's father, a learned scholar who was also well versed in astrology, divined the newborn's future and was astonished, saying: "This girl surpasses a boy! She will pass down our family learning. How can we abandon her!"[5] The father's expectation should have certainly inspired the daughter's desire for learning. According to Xue's *Nianpu* 年譜 (Chronological biography) compiled by her children, Xue began learning at 5 *sui*, reading the *Nü Lunyü* 女論語 (Analects for women), *Nü Xiaojing* 女孝經 (Classic of filial piety for women), *Nüjie* 女誡 (Instruction to women), and *Nüxue* 女學 (Women's learning) under her father's instructions. At six *sui*, she read the writings of the Four Masters,[6] the *Book of Songs*, and the *Book of Rites*. At seven to eight *sui*, she read historical works during the day and learned from her mother painting, poetry, parallel prose, music, the Kunqu opera, and embroidery at night. At nine *sui*, Xue's mother passed away, and then her father died when she was twelve *sui*. She had to support herself by doing needlework, but she never stopped composing poems. She also assumed her brother's name to participate in a highly intellectual game, the poetry bell,[7] and thus attracted Chen Shoupeng's attention. Her marriage did not stop her from learning. For example, Xue began composing *ci* poems at eighteen *sui*, shortly after the birth of her first son.[8]

Seen in this light, Xue's learning was a process of drawing upon various sources. Her parents had provided her with a solid basis for her knowledge. Their early deaths, although leaving the child in hardship, offered her the freedom to learn as she wished. Moreover, as a young girl, Xue's frequent triumph in the poetry bell game greatly increased her self-confidence. She made her living by doing needlework. Market competition pushed her to constantly improve her skill. All this learning and life experience influenced her literary creation, giving her boldness and competence as she incorporated her broad knowledge into poetic form.

Chen Shoupeng thus describes her talents in his *Brief Biography of My Late Wife, Lady Xue* (*Wangqi Xue gongren zhuanlüe*):

> Her poetic style can be traced back to the late Tang to Yin [Keng], He [Xun], Shen [Yue], and Xie [Tiao]. In writing essays she was particularly skilled in parallel prose, following the style of Xu [Ling] and Yu [Xin] and emulating the way of the Han and the Wei, motivating words with talents. She knew music, and was good at playing pipe and flute. She said: "The beats and rhythm of music are in the heart and hands, not in the notes. People who compose *ci* poems usually follow Zhou Bangyan and Jiang Kui, for their works are mostly in accordance with music. Yet, aren't works of poets such as Su [Shi], Xin [Qiji], Qin [Guan], and Liu [Yong] also in accordance with music? If the singer can handle tunes and the musician can adjust rhythms, then no word cannot be put in music." In art she was good at painting plants and birds. She first imitated the style of Wenshu and Nanlou; [9] then she transferred her painting skill into embroidery, and vice versa. The two coexisted, and one can hardly tell which is which.

> 其詩由晚唐上溯陰[鏗]、何[遜]、沈[約]、謝[朓]。爲文尤工駢體。由徐[陵]、庾[信]力追漢、魏，能以才氣運辭藻。精音律、善洞簫玉笛，謂："樂音輕重長短、緩急徐疾，在心靈手熟，不在於譜。世之填詞，喜以清真[周邦彥]、白石[姜夔]爲宗，以其多合樂之作。然蘇[軾]、辛[棄疾]、秦[觀]、柳[永]，何嘗無合樂者？若歌者能體會宮商，樂工能調和節奏，則無一詞不可入樂。"作畫則花草翎毛。初學文叔南樓。既則自出新意，變畫法爲刺繡，又變刺繡爲畫法。二者相竝，幾不知孰繡孰畫。[10]

Precisely because of her open attitude towards learning and her ability to mediate different styles, Xue later could also accept Western learning without much hesitation, which consequently enriched her poetic skill in the traditional forms.

Aligned with her principle of learning, her poetic creation incorporated all kinds of schools and styles. Her *shi* poems followed the styles from the Han, Wei, to the Tang and Song;[11] her *ci* poems emulated poets such as Li Qingzhao, Zhou Bangyan, Jiang Kui, Qin Guan, Liu Yong, Su Shi, and Xin Qiji.[12] This sort of broad-ranging approach was extremely difficult in its application. For one thing, how could Xue have borne such a heavy cultural load that covered a five-thousand-year time span and involved thousands of

poets, not to mention the newly imported Western learning? Xue mediated this conflict by drawing on an idea in the *Yijing*, "*qiongli jinxing*" (窮理盡性), which meant "[t]o detail (*qiong*) the profound and sophisticated principles (*li*) of myriad things, and to fully express (*jin*) the nature (*xing*) of each sentient being" (窮極萬物深妙之理，究盡生靈所稟之性).[13] Thus, the selection of genre and style should serve to express human feelings and reflect the principles of things, not, as for most of her contemporary male poets, to set up one's own style. Such was Xue's practical principle of literary creation. Throughout her life, Xue tried her hand at almost all kinds of literary genres and styles—except for *qu* drama, which she only performed—and, in each, achieved notable accomplishment.

Xue therefore set herself in direct conflict with the then mainstream male poetics, which had strong factional tendencies. Yi Zongkui 易宗夔 (b. 1875) observes in the *liyan* (compilation notes) to his *Xin Shishuo* 新世說 (New *Shishuo*):

> The famous Qing Confucian scholars were divided into the Cheng-Zhu and the Lu-Wang Schools; the scholarship of the Confucian classics was divided into Han Learning and Song Learning; the ancient-style prose was divided into the Tongcheng and the non-Tongcheng Schools; and poetry was divided into the Han, Wei, Tang, and Song styles. Each marked its own boundaries, extolling itself and disdaining the others.
>
> 清代名儒分程朱陸王兩派，經學分漢學宋學兩派，古文分桐城派非桐城派，詩分漢魏唐宋各派。分茅設蕝，入主出奴。[14]

Qian Zhonglian also points out that late Qing poets divided themselves into the following groups:

> One, called the Hu-Xiang school, imitated the styles of the Han, Wei, and Six dynasties, and was headed by Deng Fulun (1828-1893) and Wang Kaiyun (1832-1916). One, from Jiangxi and Fujian, was known as the "Tong-Guang ti"; it followed the Song style and was led by Chen Sanli (1852-1937), Shen Zengzhi (1850-1922), and Chen Yan (1856-1937). One labeled itself the Tang style; it was led by Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) and his disciples Fan Zengxiang (1846-1931) and Yi Shunding. One, imitating the Xikun style, was led by Li Xisheng (1864-1905), Zeng Guangjun, and Cao Yuanzhong. Among them "Tong-Guang ti" was the most prevalent.

一是模仿漢魏六朝的湖湘派，以鄧輔綸、王闓運爲首；一是模仿宋詩的江西派和閩派，當時號稱同光體，以陳三立、沈曾植、陳衍爲首；一是標榜唐人風格的，以張之洞爲首，他的門人樊增祥、易順鼎隸屬於這一派；一是模仿西崑體的，以李希聖、曾廣鈞、曹元忠爲首。同光體在這個時期獨佔上風。[15]

The "Tong-Guang ti" predominated in Xue's hometown, Minhou county, inasmuch as its leading figure Chen Yan, as well as two other major poets, Chen Baochen 陳寶琛 (1848-1935), and Zheng Xiaoxu 鄭孝胥 (1859-1938), were Xue's townspeople. Since Chen Yan was also the Chen brothers' close associate, Xue's poetics could have been easily swayed by this dominant trend. Yet she chose not to take a factional approach, instead opening herself up to all sorts of possibilities in literary creation.

Another facet of Xue's literary thought, namely, that poetry should be a major focus of women's education, directly refuted Liang Qichao's criticism of women's poetry. In 1896, Liang Qichao published "Lun Nüxue" 論女學 (On education for women), attributing China's poverty and weakness to Chinese women's jobless status. He accused Chinese women of being idle and dependent, and advocated women's education in order that "each could feed herself."[16] Based on this pragmatic approach, Liang dismissed women's poetic creation as "frivolous" (*fulang* 浮浪). He commented:

> What people called "talented women" (*cainü*) in the past refers to those who tease the wind and fondle the moon, pluck flowers and caress the grass, and thereupon compose some *ci*- or *shi*-style poems to mourn the spring and lament the parting. That's all. Doing things like this cannot be regarded as learning (*xue*). Even for a man, if he has no other specialties but to take only the poetic creation as his accomplishments, he would be denounced as a frivolous person (*fulang zhi zi*), not to mention a woman! What I mean by learning refers to that which can open up one's mind inside and help one's living outside. . . .
>
> 古之號稱才女者，則批風抹月，拈花弄草，能爲傷春惜別之語，成詩詞集數卷，斯爲至矣！若此等事，本不能目之爲學。其爲男子，苟無他所學，而專欲以此鳴者，則亦可指爲浮浪之子，靡論婦人也。吾之所謂學者，內之以拓其心胸，外之以助其生計. . .。[17]

This sort of disdain toward women's poetic talent seemed popular among male reformers of the time;[18] even the then famous feminist, Kang Youwei's daughter Kang Tongwei 康同薇, denounced gentry women's "indulgence in poetry" as "learning useless things."[19]

During the campaign to establish the first school for Chinese women, Xue Shaohui fervently rejected both Western and Chinese men's trendy accusation that Chinese women were "two hundred million lazy and useless people," nor would she admit that women's poetic creation amounted to nothing more than being *fulang*.[20] She argued:

> Alas, it has not been easy for women to possess talents. With integrity and sincerity, they have composed gentle and honest poems. The flowery classic [*Book of Songs*] puts the two "South" at the outset, showing an emphasis on the *guofeng* poems [which were mostly composed by women]. Unfortunately, later anthologists, knowing nothing about the Sage's standards of compiling the *Book of Songs*, ignored women's works in their entirety. For some who did include women, they would only attach women's poems to the end of the anthology, among poems by monks and Taoist priests. Isn't this strange? And the editors of these anthologies would not carefully collect women's works. They picked up some dozens of women poets, one or two poems each, and that is all. How does this irresponsible attitude differ from abandoning women's poetry to wild mist and tangling weeds? This is why women's poetic collections were mostly lost.
>
> Now the times have changed. Understanding scholars all agree to promote women's education. Yet what they have proposed for women to learn, such as sericulture, needlework, housekeeping, and cooking, does not go beyond the category of women's work (*fugong*) that belongs to their traditional obligation. In talking about [cultivating] women's virtue (*fude*) and women's words (*fuyan*), I don't know what else would be more efficient than [learning how to compose poetry and prose]. Not to achieve women's learning from this [poetry and prose], but from some illusory and extravagant theories, amounts to no less than abandoning women's fragile and tender qualities to wild mist and tangling weeds. The damage would go beyond imagination, more

than destroying women's learning and corrupting women's education!

嗟夫！婦女有才，原非易事。以幽閑貞靜之忱，寫溫柔敦厚之語。葩經以二《南》爲首，所以重國風也。惜後世選詩諸家，不知聖人刪詩體例，往往弗錄閨秀之作。即有之，常附列卷末，與釋道相先後，豈不怪哉？且有搜擇未精，約略纂取百數十家 ，一家存錄一二首，敷衍塞責，即謂已盡。其能與付諸荒煙蔓草湮沒者何異乎？婦女之集，多至弗克流傳，正出于此。

方今世異，有識者咸言興女學。夫女學所尚，蠶績針黹、井臼烹飪諸藝，是爲婦功，皆婦女應有之事。若婦德婦言，舍詩、文、詞外，(末)[未]由見。不由此是求，而求之幽渺夸誕之說，殆將並婦女柔順之質，皆付諸荒煙蔓草而湮沒。微特隳女學、壞女教，其弊誠有不堪設想者矣！[21]

Her defense of Chinese women against men's wrongful accusations does not mean that Xue opposed the idea of establishing a school for women. She embraced the project with great enthusiasm, but from a rather positive perspective. She took it as a great opportunity to explore and cultivate Chinese women's long-ignored talents, in order to prepare them for the country's needs in addition to their domestic duties. Seen in this light, the promotion of women's education and the introduction to the Western system was not intended to change Chinese women from useless to useful, but to make them as versatile and resourceful as men.[22] For this purpose, Xue maintained that the Chinese system of educating women, which Chinese mothers had carried on effectively for centuries, deserved equal attention with the Western system.[23] Poetic creation, as Xue firmly pointed out, was an indispensable component of the Chinese system of educating women, a type of learning (*xue* 學) important in "cultivating one's disposition and feelings" (*taoxie xingqing* 陶寫性情).[24]

Xue's broad-ranging attitude towards learning accorded with her emphasis on women's poetic creation. On the one hand, traditional poetics, which focused on the expression of men's life experience, lacked a ready discourse through which to express women's special life experiences. On the other hand, the long-standing marginalization of women's poetry from the mainstream male system ironically offered women freedom of creation. They did not have to conform to any male poetic rules. Instead, they could establish poetic systems of their own by synthesizing various ways of expression.

Xue's Poetic Concerns and Corresponding Poetic Reforms

Few Chinese women writers before Xue Shaohui had covered thematic territory with comparable breadth. Themes that had previously occurred often in women's poems, such as parting, loneliness, flowery mornings and moonlit nights, now retreated to the background, setting out the poet's masterful portrayal of a rapidly changing China and the inner turbulence caused by these changes. The turmoil subverted not only her feelings but also her ink-brush. The poet became wordless—she could not find accurate words to respond to the unfamiliar things that had thronged in. Yet her obstinate personality would not allow her to give up, hence a life-long unabashed struggle between words and meanings. To this day, we can still feel the hardship she endured in weaving those strange, alien images with powerful, heated words.

In Xue's time, scholar-officials advocated "reform in the poetic realm" (*shijie weixin* 詩界維新). Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1837-1905), Liang Qichao, Xia Zengyou 夏曾佑 (1865-1924), and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865-1898) had all argued for a "revolution in the poetic realm" (*shijie geming* 詩界革命). Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯 writes:

> The so-called *shijie geming*, to use Liang Qichao's words, was to "change the spirit [of traditional poetry], not its form," to "use old styles in containing new ideas," not to "pile up new terms" (*Poetic Talks from Drinking Ice Studio*). . . . He also said: "If one composes poems today, . . . he must prepare himself from three aspects: first, new ideals, second, new words, and third, to fashion them using the styles of ancient poets. Only then could a poem become a poem" (*Journey to Hawai'i*).[25]

Xue's efforts in her poetic reform were similar to those of Liang and the others, except that she never clearly stated the term *shijie geming* or *shijie weixin*. In other words, she did not intentionally make her poems look "new." She just recorded her experience honestly in response to the changing environment. Since many newly emerged things could not find corresponding expressions in traditional poetics, she had to find her own way, different from that which was familiar to readers. Maybe this was what people would term "new."

Xue's earliest inner turbulence came from her husband's decision to study abroad and his consequent absence. In 1883, Xue was barely 18 *sui* (17 years old), three years into her marriage and one hundred days after the birth of her eldest son. At this happy time for a young wife, the husband suddenly decided to go to Japan. Xue asked:

I heard that in the place of Yingzhou,
Weak water cannot float grass roots.
Immortals had long disappeared;
Tatooed faces swallow each other.
. . .
The elixir is no longer effective;
And where would one find old classics?

我聞瀛州地，
弱水無浮根。
神仙久不作，
雕題相並吞。
. . .
已乏藥餌靈，
安有典墳存？[26]

After staying in Japan for six months, Shoupeng returned home. Three years later, he went to Europe. Xue again questioned her husband's motivation. She wrote:

I heard that the country Da Qin,
Is beyond the White Wolf River.
The Hu boys play the Bili pipes;
The Qiang girls wearing exotic flowers.
Galloping on horses to hunting events;
They often visited each other at fur tents.
Snow piles in the early autumn;
Icy willows hang on frozen branches.
They have different customs;
Their language and writing are not ours.
    [So, why should you go, my dear husband?]

側聞大秦國，
已越白狼河。
胡兒吹畢栗，
羌女戴蠻花。
射生牧馬出，
毳幕時相過。
八月見積雪，
凍柳僵枝柯。
習俗與世異，
文翰非吾阿。[27]

Her husband's studying abroad affected Xue in various ways. It subverted her quiet life routine, forcing her to reach out to the world. It also shattered the long-standing myth that China was the center of the world. Although, since the Opium War, the Chinese elite should have already recognized this reality, they hardly accepted it, nor did they closely study it. For example, Xue continued to refer to Japan and Europe with derogatory terms traditionally used for barbarian places, and her depiction of foreign life styles repeated stereotypes of primitive peoples.

Yet, from the aspect of poetics, Xue's two parting poems shattered the conventional structure of this poetic subgenre. Traditionally, a scholar left home for the purpose of pursuing either knowledge or office—things closely related to a gentleman's socially encoded life purpose. Therefore the wife would be expected to accept this sort of parting unconditionally. Now Shoupeng was going to a place other than a gentleman's conventional destination, such as the capital. With her limited knowledge of foreign countries, Xue Shaohui would naturally question her husband's motivation for going abroad. As soon as Xue cast doubts on her husband's motivation, however, she broke the protocol of this sort of poem. These two parting poems set up an example which shows the subtle change of the husband-wife relationship during the reform period, reflecting new factors in both the poetic theme and form.

Her loneliness was soon offset by new knowledge imported from abroad. Caring Shoupeng never failed to send back interesting souvenirs, along with detailed introductions to their cultural and historical origins and backgrounds. Xue Shaohui always responded with a *ci* poem, possibly because its lyric features, in conjunction with the poet's musical sense, might more properly express her tender feelings. Xue also intentionally chose tunes that were originally titled after similar themes. These *ci* poems, composed between 1886 and 1889, while Shoupeng was in Europe, included "To Master Yiru [Shoupeng's courtesy name] for the Buddhist Sūtras Written on Palm Leaves He Sent Back from Ceylon" (Tune: *Rao foge* 繞佛閣 [Around the Buddhist Pavilion]), "To Yiru for the Rubbings of the Ancient Egyptian Stone Carvings He Sent Back" (Tune: *Mu hu sha* 穆護沙 [Solemnly Guarding the Sand]), "Yiru sent back Jewels" (Tune: *Babao zhuang* 八寶妝 [Eight-gem Ornament]), "Gold Watch" (Tune: *Shier shi* 十二時 [Twelve Divisions of a Day]), and so forth.

From these *ci* poems, we can see that Xue obtained knowledge about the world at amazing speed. She followed Shoupeng's journey: "Your sails, blown by the Indian wind, / Must have passed the Red Sea" (計天竺風帆，遙過紅海) (*Rao foge*),[28] using accurate geographical names instead of the archetypal terms that had appeared in her afore-mentioned parting poems. She studied the fall of Egyptian Civilization: "The stone figure differs not

from the bronze camel, / To this day still lying in thorns" (況石人何異銅駝，猶眠荊棘上) (*Mu hu sha*).[29] Her comparison of the Sphinx with the bronze camel, a symbol of Chinese dynastic change, shows an effort to understand foreign history in Chinese terms. She admired the refinement of Swiss watches in correct technical terms: "I can hear the light tick-tock, / Marking each brief moment. / Inside the axis, / Shines the splendor of metal" (但脈脈聞聲輕扣，瞬息能分時候，機軸中，含精金外溢) (*Shier shi*).[30] She even demonstrated knowledge of Western political and legal systems. Below, taking her poem to the tune "Babao zhuang" as an example, I examine how she combined various value and knowledge systems to propose her ideals and understandings of the world.

To the Tune "Babao zhuang"

Yiru sent me several pieces of jewelry. Among them is a pair of gold bracelets inlaid with diamond flowers and birds. They look splendid, … delicate, and elegant. His letter tells that when Napoleon the Third was on the throne, his queen, Eugénie, was in favor. In order to engage Eugénie's friendship, the Queen of Spain sent an envoy to buy diamonds in Holland and chose a French artisan to make [the bracelets], inasmuch as the Dutch artisans were good at cutting diamonds and the French good at making diamond ornaments. After the bracelets were done… the Queen of Spain presented them to the Queen of France. Before long the Spanish exiled their queen, enthroning the Prince of Prussia as their new king. The Queen of France helped the Queen of Spain, and Napoleon the Third declared war with Prussia. This was the Franco-Prussian War. He was defeated and forced to abdicate. The French people surrounded the palace, and the Queen escaped in disguise. All her clothes and jewelry were confiscated by the people and stored in the national warehouse. The Queen sued in order to retrieve them for her pension, but was rejected by the congress. In 1887, the congress made the following decision: "All this jewelry belongs to the Queen of France, not to Eugénie. Since Eugénie is no longer the queen, she has no right to possess these things. Now France, already a democratic (*minzhu*) republic, has no need to preserve the King and Queen's belongings. They should be auctioned and the money should go to the national endowment." All agreed, and more than one thousand items . . . were auctioned in a single day. Yiru paid a great amount for this pair of bracelets. Because

of their connection with French history, he sent them back for my appreciation. What is important for a woman, I believe, is her virtue, not her ornament. Flying Swallow in the Han and Taizhen in the Tang were both famous for their beautiful attire, but where are they now? As for this inauspicious thing, already having gone through the rise and fall of an era, what is there for us to treasure? So I composed the following *ci* lyric in reply to Yiru:

Neither the linked-jade puzzle,
Nor the As-you-wish pearl.
Diamonds in fine cuts, to make gold bracelets.
Well-wrought gold would never decay,
Much less its dazzling splendor.
Imagine the thin-waist foreign queen,
Delicate arms adorned with these gems.
Waving her soldiers to the battlefields,
At a farewell banquet,
Hairpins tinkling.

Yet enemies were fierce,
And people were disheartened.
No intention to fight, they rebelled.
Singing *La Marseillaise*,
Sad songs chorused everywhere.
To avoid disaster,
The queen covered her face with a black veil,
And fled with empty hands.
She begged for her emerald hairpins,
Already scattered, with inlayed flowers.
Only this pair of bracelets left,
Making us sigh, for the change of the world.

八寶妝

繹如寄珍飾數事，內有赤金條脫一對，以鑽石箝爲花鳥，玲瓏光耀，. . . 輕巧工雅。書言拿布侖第三稱帝時，其后歐色尼有寵。西班牙女主欲與結歡，令使臣赴荷蘭選鑽石，覓法之良工鑲配之，因荷蘭精切鑽而法人善箝鑽也。既成，. . . 獻諸后。亡何，西班牙人逐女主，欲立普國王子爲王。后助女主，

拿布侖第三與普齟齬，成普法之戰。法[王]兵敗被廢，國人群起圍宮，后青衣出走 . . . 一切服御皆爲法人所得，藏諸庫。后屢訟，欲取爲贍養費，資議院不許。丁亥，議定：凡茲珍飾，系 法后物，非歐色尼物。今歐色尼既非法后，不應僭有是物。法既立民主，則帝、后之物皆無所用，定價聽人購買資國用。僉曰："可。" 乃將所藏諸物千餘件 . . . 拍賣，. . . 一夕而盡。繹如以鉅資得此，因與西史有關，寄余品之 。余思婦人在德，非在外飾。漢之飛燕、唐之太真，外紀傳其服飾侈美，今皆安在？況此妖物，已歷盛衰興廢，又何足貴乎？姑塡此詞，以報繹如。

玉匪連環，
珠匪如意，
斫粟配成金釧。
百煉金剛原不壞，
況有熒煌光炫。
遙思腰細閼氏，
飾臂輕盈，
行宮祖帳開歡宴。
麾指諸軍行陣，
釵聲交顫。

無奈敵勢披猖，
民心散潰，
倒戈安事鏖戰。
唱麥兒，
悲歌四起；
避劫火，
青紗蒙面。
祗空手逃亡，
乞援翠翹，
零落隨花鈿。
剩繞腕一雙，
令人感歎滄桑變。[31]

Xue takes the standpoint of the French people in criticizing Queen Eugénie. The first stanza begins with two allusions. The jade-link puzzle alludes to the following story:

> After King Xiang of Qi died, King Zhao of Qin sent an envoy with a jade-link puzzle to the queen [of King Xiang], saying, "Qi is full

of wise men. Is there anyone who knows how to solve this puzzle?" The Queen showed the puzzle to all the courtiers, but none knew how to disentangle it. The Queen thereupon used a hammer to break the link. She dismissed the Qin envoy, saying: "I have respectfully solved the puzzle."

齊襄王卒，秦昭王嘗遣使遺君王后玉連環曰："齊多智，解此環否？" 后示群臣，莫知解者。乃自引椎椎破之，謝秦使曰："謹以解矣！"[32]

The As-you-wish pearl symbolizes Buddhist compassion. If the gold bracelets are neither jade nor pearl, then Eugénie is neither the wise, courageous, and patriotic queen of Qi, nor a compassionate, merciful Buddhist. She throws her people into warfare for a mere arm ornament. The banquet scene is especially satirical: Eugénie waves the French soldiers to the battlefields, with that very bracelet on her arm, small wonder that she willstir up a mutiny.

In the second stanza, Xue transliterates the French revolutionary song, *La Marseillaise*, into Chinese as *Maier* 麥兒, meaning "wheat" and hence clearly alluding to the song *Maixiu* 麥秀, "Wheat sprouts," which laments the fall of a dynasty.[33] Thus, Xue interprets the French people's rebellion as a patriotic campaign. More significantly, Xue introduces the Western democratic, congressional, and legal systems through her poetic account of the event.

Of course, the West not only offered China democracy and a legal system. Along with these ideals came imperial ambitions accompanied by ships and canons. During the 1884 Sino-French War, the French Navy invaded Mawei 馬尾 Harbor in the vicinity of Fuzhou. Most of Shoupeng's schoolmates from the Fujian Navy Academy were killed in action. In 1889, Shoupeng came back from Europe and went with his wife to mourn his dead comrades. On their way they heard from the boat woman a story unknown to the public: although the Mawei battle demolished the Fujian Navy in its entirety, the next morning, the French Navy had encountered a sudden ambush that fatally injured the admiral and forced the French to retreat. This ambush puzzled both the Chinese and the French governments. According to the boat woman's account, the French Navy was attacked by a group of local Fuzhou salt vendors and butchers. The ambushers themselves also died with the French enemies. Who would mourn these common heroes? Xue immediately composed a *ci* poem, in the tune of "Manjiang hong" 滿江紅 (The River Is Red):

Vast, gloomy river and sky,
Remind us of that day
Crocodiles invaded.
In the wind and rain,
With stars flying, thunder roaring,
Ghosts and deities wailed.
Monkeys, cranes, insects, and sands, washed away by waves;
Salt vendors and butchers flocked in like mosquitoes.
Stepping on night tides,
Rowing in the swift currents,
They intended to ambush the enemy.

Creak, creak: the sound of oars
Dampening, the fog and mist;
Cannon balls exploded,
Dragons and snakes hid.
They laughed at those sons of barbarian rulers,
Who could barely breathe.
Although gone with waves and currents,
They once subverted the thundering enemy.
Sank into grass and swamps,
These martyrs of the nation.
Who will collect their souls?

莽莽江天，
憶當日，
鱷魚深入。
風雨裏，
星飛雷吼，
鬼神號泣。
猿鶴蟲沙淘浪去，
販鹽屠豕如蚊集。
踏夜潮，
擊楫出中流，
思偷襲。

咿啞響，
煙霧濕；
砰訇起，
龍蛇蟄。
笑天驕種子，
僅餘呼吸。

縱逐波濤流水逝，
曾翻霹靂雄師戢。
惜沉淪草澤，
國殤魂，
誰搜輯？[34]

Using the tune of “Manjiang hong,” the poet paid the highest homage to these common heroes. Not only does the redness of the river in the tune title reconstruct the battle scene of the time, but it also reminds us of the heroic name of the Song patriotic general Yue Fei, to whom a well-known patriotic song was attributed, also to the tune of “Manjiang hong.”

Xue’s earliest contact with the outside world exposed her to complicated knowledge about the West, making her cautious and critical in accepting Western culture, as attested to by her role in establishing the first girls’ school operated by Chinese women (differing from the first Chinese girls’ school established by an English missionary in 1844).[35]

Throughout the campaign for women’s education, Xue stood out as an independent thinker. Her sharp insights and down-to-earth attitude won support and respect from the Chen brothers as well as other male and female reformers. Lai Mayi and her colleagues incorporated Xue’s suggestions into their revision of the curriculum.[36] Many women corroborated Xue’s opinions with poems and essays.[37] Xue herself and other major contributors wrote continuously for the first Chinese women’s journal, *Nü xuebao* 女學報 (English title: *Chinese Girl's Progress*).[38] Their thematic concerns ranged from women’s education, women’s rights, and even women’s participation in politics, to Shanghai women workers’ salaries and working hours. In brief, the entire campaign for women’s education proceeded smoothly and rapidly, bringing hope to all the participants in Shanghai, Chinese and foreigners alike.[39]

Meanwhile, in the capital Beijing, the leading reformers Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao convinced Emperor Guangxu to speed up political reforms and thus offended Empress Dowager Cixi (I shall discuss Cixi’s complicated role in the reform era in another article). On September 21st, 1898, Cixi terminated the reforms. On September 28th, six leading reformers were executed, including Kang Guangren 康廣仁 (d. 1898), one of the eight initiators and the financial executive of the girls’ school, and Tan Sitong, an active supporter of the project.[40] One can imagine how reformers in Shanghai were shocked and devastated upon hearing of Cixi’s coup d’état! Xue, however, wrote down the following lines on September 30th, the Mid-autumn Festival, titled “Reading History on the Mid-autumn Night” (*Zhongqiu ye dushi zuo* 中秋夜讀史作):

Disaster and fortune never match each other;
Success and failure only show after the chess game is over.
Grand ambition craves appreciation from the top;
Wisdom bag contains no tactics to protect the royal house.
Was it a real match between the ruler and the subject?
One should cherish the efforts in maintaining family ties.
Last night, staring at the sky, I divined by the North Dipper:
Still, the bright moon shone at the height of autumn.

從來禍福不相侔，
成敗唯看棋局收。
篤志有人欣御李，
智囊無策到安劉。
豈真遇合風雲會，
須惜艱難骨肉謀。
昨夜長天覘北斗，
依然明月照高秋。[41]

One cannot help wondering if Xue was criticizing Kang Youwei: Kang was happy to be appreciated by the emperor, but he did not have the talent to invigorate the falling dynasty. Thus, his relationship with the emperor was not a real match between emperor and capable minister; all he had done was to manipulate the young emperor and undermine his relationship with the empress dowager. Xue lamented the difficulty of maintaining family ties, as though she had sympathy for Cixi.

To be sure, Xue and her family had no connections whatsoever with the emperor or with the empress dowager. Chen Shoupeng, a diligent scholar, indulged himself in reading and writing all his life, never pursuing rank and wealth. His elder brother Chen Jitong, though possessing great talent, was not successful in his political career.[42] This meant that the entire family participated in the 1898 reforms as private scholars. Their attitudes, therefore, become very significant, and deserve our close attention. Reading the entire poem carefully, we can see that Xue had clear ideas about the situation—the emperor failed and the empress dowager regained power. In spite of all this, Xue still said that the chess game was not yet over. Thus, her primary concern was obviously for the reform program itself. Her attitude breaks the delineation that has long dominated scholarship on modern Chinese history between reformers and conservatives, the emperor faction and the empress dowager faction. Xue represents the voice of reformers who did not equate the reform enterprise with the palace power struggle.

Although the reform movement had been dealt a devastating blow, Xue remained optimistic, just like “the bright moon shining at the height of autumn,” and soon attempted another way of reform, translating and compiling a number of Western literary, historical, and scientific works with her husband.[43]

While Xue and Shoupeng were in Shanghai and then in Ningbo writing and translating, the 1900 Boxer Rebellion took place. At least five long poems in Xue’s *Collected Writings* reflect this event from various aspects: “Reading the *Song History*” (Du Songshi 讀宋史) (1900), “Eulogy to His Majesty Returning to the Capital” (Huiluan song 回鑾頌) (1901), “Song of the Old Courtesan” (Laoji xing 老妓行) (1902), “Melody of the Golden Well” (Jinjing qu 金井曲) (1908), and “Song of the Old Woman from Fengtai” (Fengtai lao’ao ge 豐臺老媼歌) (1909).

“Reading the *Song History*” is a seven-character old-style poem. The entire poem is about a divine army destroying demons, obviously alluding to the Boxer Rebellion. The poet describes the incident in a matter-of-fact manner, without pressing a clear value judgment.[44] The tone of the “Eulogy to His Majesty Returning to the Capital,” written in the following year, is critical of this rebellion, but blames mainly the government’s inept handling of the situation. The poet wrote in the preface:

> In this past event the statesmen were bewildered and disobedient; the ministers and the generals were idle and wanton. They wrongly believed in Guo Jing’s heresy, who interpreted the eight trigrams in strange and baseless ways; they allowed Zhang Jue to enroll disciples, who confused the essence of the Three Learnings. . . . The barbarian soldiers thereby invaded the capital; the five-colored banners competed to occupy the throne. Who would know how to resist the enemies? Broken guns could not guard our grand fortress.
>
> 曩者臣工爂逆，文武酣嬉。誤信郭京煽術，八卦之奇遁渺冥；坐令張角授徒，三教之珠英混亂。. . . 遂使嗅地占軍，五彩幡爭窺象闕；誰是望塵知敵，半段槍莫守雄關。[45]

Xue’s major purpose in composing the “Eulogy to His Majesty” was to create the image of Guangxu as a benevolent Emperor and filial son, thereby restoring his relationship with Cixi. Such an emperor, backed by the empress dowager, could then go back to the capital and reissue the reform: “Obtaining heavenly talents and benefiting from the geographic situation, the Zhou state [referring to the Qing court] can easily reform its system;

esteem the strong trunk, though with weak branches, the imperial enterprise can still be rooted in its old ground."[46] It took great courage to propose such daring suggestions at this sensitive moment. Since Cixi's *coup d'état* on September 21, 1898, she had intended Guangxu's abdication. Many gentry members strongly opposed this idea; among them a leading figure was Jing Yuanshan 經元善, the initiator of the campaign of the girls' school. Jing was therefore put in prison for over a year.[47] As Jing's close associates, the Chen brothers and their families must have been strongly affected by this incident. Although Cixi reconsidered reform after the Boxer Rebellion,[48] even radical scholar-officials were cautious at the moment.[49] Xue, an ordinary housewife, frankly advocated reform. Her forbearance and insistence in preserving what benefited the nation is clearly revealed in this poetic piece.

Xue's other three poems about the Boxer Rebellion reflected women's experiences during the incident. Although the "Golden Well" and the "Old Woman from Fengtai" were written much later, their themes were consistent with that of the "Eulogy to His Majesty." The "Golden Well" imitates Bai Juyi's "Song of Unending Sorrow," recounting the story of Guangxu and his favorite concubine, Zhenfei 珍妃, but is much subtler, similar to the style of Li Shangyin's "Untitled" series. The poet describes Zhenfei's death as a suicide; this disagrees with the broadly circulated version that had Zhenfei killed by Cixi. Compelled by foreign invaders, she jumped into the well to die for her emperor and her country. Thus Xue changed the cause of Zhenfei's death from family conflicts to the sorrow of a nation. Her effort in fixing the relationship between Guangxu and Cixi goes without saying. In "Old Woman from Fengtai" Xue uses a wet-nurse as her mouthpiece to recount the causes of the Boxer Rebellion, blaming the incident on the restlessness of Manchu noblemen. This interpretation involves the power struggle between the Manchu and the Han gentry, and awaits further study.

The "Old Courtesan" is based on the story of Fu Caiyun 傅彩雲 (a.k.a. Sai Jinhua 賽金花) (?-1936), composed between Fan Zengxiang's "Melody of Colored Clouds" (*Caiyun qu* 彩雲曲, hereafter "Former Melody") (1899) and "Later Melody of Colored Clouds" (*Hou Caiyun qu* 後彩雲曲, hereafter "Later Melody") (1904). Fan's "Former Melody" begins with Caiyun's acquaintance with her future husband, the Number One Scholar Hong Jun 洪 鈞 (1839-1893), and continues to her resumption of a courtesan identity. His "Later Melody" focuses on Caiyun and the Boxer Rebellion. Xue's poem covers both parts of Caiyun's story. The two poets recount Caiyun's life following similar plots, but in very different tones, as attested to by their narration of the two most important episodes.

The first episode tells about Caiyun's journey to Europe with her husband Hong Jun. Fan's "Former Melody" writes:

Deep in the palace, the emperor was looking for an imperial envoy.
From the place of talents, came the pure and outstanding Master Hong.
He once dreamed of going into the Hun's tent court,
With a smile, the khan's wife listened to his peace proposal.

The envoy's celestial ship sailed to ten thousand *li* away;
Its rainbow flags were accompanied by a colorful *luan* bird.
Known as the refined tiger,[50] his poems were circulated around the world;
Dazzling the startled swans, her hairpins displayed across the ocean.

On Queen Victoria's divine birthday,
Colorful flowers piled up on the Lady's City.
Dragons on the river were all her grandsons;
Barbarian parrots addressed her as the Heavenly Empress.

Envoy coming from the East, repeatedly presented wine.
Sitting also in his brocade carriage, a most beautiful consort.
Rulers gathered to appreciate the dew bestowed by Heaven;
They awarded the envoy a medal with tangled-dragon design.

The fairy Shuangcheng very much pleased the Queen of the West,
In and out the scented palace, fixing her pendants now and then.
Her Majesty and the blue bird frequently exchanged visits;
And they took excursions together twice a month.

Gradually, she changed her dresses into the Western style,
But her accent still retained the Wu girl's charm.
Attending the royal banquets, she had no problem eating seafood;
Responding letters to the hosts, she knew how to write in English

Summoned by the phoenix edict, she entered the cold mirror palace;
Glass reflecting her figure, sitting on the royal dais.
Who could imagine that the grand manner of a female sovereign
Would be regarded equally with a willow branch![51]

深宮欲得皇華史，
才地容齋最清異。
夢入天驕帳殿遊，
閼氏含笑聽和議。

博望仙槎萬裏通，
霓旌難得彩鸞同。
辭賦環球知繡虎，
釵鈿橫海照驚鴻。

女君維亞喬松壽，
夫人城闕花如繡。
河上蛟龍盡外孫，
虜中鸚鵡稱天后。

使節西來屢奉春，
錦車馮嫽亦傾城。
冕旒七毳瞻繁露，
槃敦雙龍贈寶星。

雙成雅得西王意，
出入椒庭整環佩。
妃主青禽時往來，
初三下九同遊戲。

裝束潛隨夷俗更，
語言總愛吳娃媚。
侍食偏能厭海鮮，
報書亦解繙英字。

鳳紙宣來鏡殿寒，
玻璃取影御床寬。
誰知坤媼山河貌，
只與楊枝一例看。

And Xue’s poem describes the same episode as follows:

In the eighth month, the envoy embarked on a long voyage,
Taking on a vessel flying single-eagle flags.
Bringing a six-horse imperial carriage and holding a dragon penant,
Their lone ship followed foreign sea birds, between ocean and sky.

In Berlin city, the lovebirds built their nest;
Her official attire, of the pheasant design, dazzled barbarian eyes.
No need to discuss the proper position for a concubine;
This little star shone over the bright moon!

The allies defeated France, now enjoying great reputation,
Headed by the iron-blooded minister and the bearded general.
The white-headed khan still looked handsome and dignified;
The thin-waisted queen appeared heroic and generous.

On the golden dais, Her Majesty received the Heavenly envoy,
Attended by his female consort, in a brocade carriage.
In an oriole voice, she played a capable interpreter;
In elegant handwriting, she translated foreign languages.

Her Majesty was pleased to meet with this young friend.
Treating her to an imperial banquet, with sour cream and raw meat.
In the mirror palace, rare flowers took a photo side by side,
Like two sisters, born to the same parents.

The native people all admired her favored status.
They saw her often at tea parties and ball rooms.
Alas the young officers of primitive places,
Imagined her spring-wind face only through her pictures.

奉使乘槎八月時，
輶軒遠采單鷹旗。
皇華六轡秉龍節，
海天一舸隨鴟夷。

柏林城築鴛鴦闕，
錦雞官誥驕回鶻。
奚須江汜論國風，
竟作小星奪明月。

聯邦破法聲望高，
相國鐵血將軍毛。
可汗頭白尚威武，
閼氏腰細能英豪。
太歲金床見天使，
錦車馮嫽充陪侍。

鶯語善傳通譯辭，
鸞書代解旁行字。

恪尊喜與忘年交，
酪漿腥肉開天庖 。
鏡殿名花偕照影，
儼如姐妹雙同胞。

爰劍種人盡豔羨，
茶筵舞會尋常見。
可憐鼽地骨都侯，
畫圖想識春風面。[52]

The two poets differ in their portrayal of Fu Caiyun's identity and personal features. According to Fan Zengxiang, the charm of this female envoy lay first and foremost in her beautiful appearance and soft, coy Wu accent—an obvious projection of scholar-officials' taste of courtesans onto the Western aristocrats. In describing Caiyun's association with the female ruler Victoria, Fan never failed to bring up her low social status.[53] He compared Caiyun to the fairy Shuangcheng and the blue bird, the two legendary attendants waiting on the Queen Mother of the West (*Xi wangmu* 西王母), an obvious allusion to Victoria. He also exposed Caiyun's courtesan identity using the metaphor of a "willow branch," which could be plucked by any man.[54] Thus, when Queen Victoria took photographs with Courtesan Caiyun at the mirror palace, she lowered her own status. It was precisely because Fan looked down upon Caiyun so much that he made her appear so scandolous in his "Later Melody."

According to Xue, however, Caiyun won appreciation from the German Empress because of her talents in diplomacy. The two took a picture together, looking like two sisters born to the same parents. Such favor from Her Majesty elicited the admiration of the court, where everybody competed to gain her acquaintance. For Xue, Caiyun represented Qing China. Never mind how low her domestic status was, she was accorded equal status with the Western aristocrats in international society.[55] Xue's positive description presaged her portrayal of Caiyun during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion. About Caiyun's behavior during this period, Xue wrote:

Before long foreign horses neighed at the imperial palace.
Raging military flags darkened the broad fields.
The old commander of the invaders, with deep blue eyes,
Was among those who once admired her beauty.

Soldiers assaulted women on the capital streets.
In orchid inner chambers, virtuous ladies ambushed like mice.
Only this singing girl courageously stepped forward.[56]
Wearing country folks' cloths, but speaking a foreign language.

The enemy commander, stroking his beard, rose to greet her.
What did he see? The envoy's wife, his old fantasy.
At their later tryst in the palace, they felt as if in a dream;
He ordered soldiers to keep quiet, no more bustle around.

War of Roses was stopped, and treaties signed,
Thanks, it seems, to this willow branch from Zhangtai.
. . .

亡何闕下嘶胡馬，
滚滚旌旗黯原野。
統帥老將碧眼高，
當時曾喚真真者。

捕卒六街擾婦女，
蘭閨淑媛伏如鼠。
偏有冬兒慷慨前，
短衣縛袴能胡語。

酋帥撚須起攜手，
意中喜見使君婦。
鸞殿相逢似夢中，
特令諸軍靜刁鬥。

外使莫爭玫瑰花，
約章似借章台柳。[57]
. . .

About the same event, Fan Zengxiang wrote:

The enemy commander occupied the imperial throne.
In the capital, nine out of ten houses were broken.
The warrior loved women more than wealth;
In this pure autumn, in the cassia hall, he could not sleep.
He heard that a beauty in the brothel quarter,
Spoke German and was good at this language.
. . .

Now Caiyun's bedroom was muddled by the warfare,
Where to find the Wu Mountain, whirling clouds and rain?

Suddenly a letter was sent to her, from the commander.
Then came his person, looking for the blue bird among flowers.
The lady, though aging, still looked attractive and charming.
She changed into a Western dress, to suit the general's taste.
. . .

This wild chick flew into the very wretched palace;
Frivolous foxes fondled each other on the royal dais.
The general led her by hand to the jade terrace,
Enchanted even before they ascended the enchanting tower.
. . .

Peace talk, or war, arguments continued a long time.
Allied troops randomly slaughtered people and animals.
Caiyun, with her little heart of the Budhisattva mercy,
Manipulated the barbarian beasts with her tender hands.

"Do not loot common folks' honest money;
Do not brandish knives, forcing your way with young women."
Now we believe that a femme fatale's words
May surpass an eloquent man in the power of persuasion.

The seventy-year old general was already white-bearded;
The forty-year old lady richly decorated herself.
Since the Franco-Prussian War, years had past;
Old and weak, he was capable neither in bed nor in battlefields.

Among courtesans, was a lustful woman.
With a smile, she toyed with the tiger's beard, kissing his forehead.
. . .
Yet, in the nine temples, gods and deities were enraged.
Purple smoke rose from the jade terrace, at midnight.

Fire horses galloped through phoenix towers;
Gold snakes licked the ceremonial altars.
The two lovebirds jump up in the brocade tent,
Their naked bodies wearing no underwear.
. . .

瓦酋入據儀鑾坐，
鳳城十家九家破。
武夫好色勝貪才，
桂殿秋清少眠臥。

聞道平康有麗人，
能操德語工德文。
. . .
彩雲此際泥秋衾，
雲雨巫山何處尋。

忽報將軍親折簡，
自來花下問青禽。
徐娘雖老猶風致，
巧換西裝稱人意。
. . .

暦亂宮帷飛野雞，
荒唐御座擁狐狸。
將軍攜手瑤階下，
至上迷樓意已迷。
. . .

言和言戰紛紜久，
亂殺平人與雞狗。
彩雲一點菩提心，
操縱夷獠在纖手。

“胠篋休探赤側錢，
操刀莫逼紅顏婦。”
始信傾城哲婦言，
強於辯士儀秦口。

將軍七十虯髯白，
四十秋娘盛釵澤。
普法戰罷又經年，
枕席行師老無力。

女閭中有女登徒，
笑捋虎須親虎額。
. . .

誰知九廟神靈怒，
夜半瑤台生紫霧。

火馬飛馳過鳳樓，
金蛇舔䄙燔雞樹。
此時錦帳雙鴛鴦，
皓軀驚起無襦袴。[58]
. . .

According to Xue, it was in order to protect women from the invaders' assault that Caiyun courageously stepped forward, without regard to her own safety. Upon meeting the Commander of the Eight Joined Forces, one of her old admirers in Berlin, Caiyun wore country folks' clothes, without the slightest intention of flirtation. Yet according to Fan Zengxiang, Caiyun was a wild chick, a fox spirit, and a lustful woman of bad taste. She craved sexual encounters even amidst warfare, and shamelessly tried to please the commander of the enemy. She therefore enraged the spirits of the imperial ancestors, causing the blaze in the palace. She rescued people in the capital, merely to show off a femme fatale's power, at no risk to herself.

Why such a big difference? As Xue concludes in her poem:

The *Biographies of Exemplary Women* did not exclude femmes
fatales.
Discussions of the Woman's Way should focus on virtue and
proper manner.
My poem, about that old courtesan, is composed for the reference
Of the gentlemen who collect folk songs to learn about the world.

《女傳》弗因孽嬖刪，
婦道要論容德美。
一編爲譜《老妓行》，
用告采風士君子。[59]

Xue composed this poem with the clear intention of refuting gentlemen such as Fan Zengxiang. Although Fan's "Later Melody" was not yet written, similar condemnations of Fu Caiyun must have circulated among gentlemen of his sort. According to Xue, if the Han scholar Liu Xiang would not exclude even treacherous women from his *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, modern scholars should also give due account to a complicated but influential character such as Fu Caiyun. Since recounting a life narrative often involves evaluation, Xue and Fan's fundamental difference lies in their standards of *fudao* 婦道, or the Woman's Way.

For Fan, *fudao* means exclusively women's chastity. Since Caiyun, as a courtesan, had already lost her chastity, her life could contribute nothing of moral significance. Fan set up this overtone at the beginning of his "Former Melody": "Since Xi Shi's lake boat harbored in Suzhou, / Trees of female chastity all turned into bending willows" (自從西子湖船住，女貞盡化垂楊樹). [60] Xue attributed a much broader connotation to *fudao*, focusing on *rong* (manner) and *de* (virtue) as she defines:

A woman's manner follows ritual rules,
Not lying in her sensuous appearance.
Good heart sustains her beauty;
Virtue establishes her reputation.

婦容在禮法，
不在貌傾城。
善心以爲窈，
德車稱結旌。[61]

Caiyun behaved properly at diplomatic occasions and should, therefore, be acknowledged as having good manners. She courageously rescued people at her own risk, and hence demonstrated virtue. Although she was far from a traditional chaste woman, she ought at least to receive adequate evaluation. [62] Xue's fair attitude possibly resulted from her concurrent compilation of the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women* (*Waiguo lienü zhuan* 外國列女傳). When writing about other cultures, the Chinese standard could no longer be sustained as the only standard. By the same token, when recounting foreign women's stories, Chinese *fudao* could no longer suffice as the basis for evaluation of merit or chastity. Xue's observation of the moral principles and ideal personalities of Western women inspired her to reconsider the Chinese tradition, and led her to establish her own understanding of the Woman's Way.[63]

In 1907, Xue and her whole family moved to Beijing, where she spent her last four years. Though ill, she never ceased writing. During this period, she focused on seven-character and five-character songs. Likely aware that her life would be over soon, she eagerly picked up these freer styles to register her thoughts. In terms of the thematic concerns, her primary focus was still reform. She wrote in "Miscellaneous Poems about Beijing" (*Beijing zashi* 北京雜詩) (No. 3 and No. 4):

The traffic police wear tidy uniforms, on duty in turn;
Vehicles coming and going, no need to announce.
Merchandise richly displayed, waiting for good prices;

Livestock lined up, diligently plough the fields.
Poles transport electricity along highways.
Railroads lead wheels out of the capital.
These pleasant views attract visitors,
Silk whip, shadows of hats, move along on the grass.

Harmonious wind mildly blows into neighborhoods;
Ministries have abolished the clerical system.
At tea parties, officials compete to befriend translators;
Climbing up clouds requires learning foreign languages.
Students mark numbers on their clothes;
Vendors fly color flags in front of their shops.
One thing manifests the Sage’s governing:
The court just ended corporal punishment.[64]

更番街子短衣輕，
輦轂無煩警蹕聲。
百貨紛陳求善價，
萬牲羅列勤躬耕。
幡竿掣電排官道，
鐵軌牽輪出禁城。
贏得遊人足清賞，
鞭絲帽影踏莎行。

和風煦拂遍閭閻。
部署於今廢吏胥。
茶會爭交象譯客，
雲程要策蟹行書。
諸生襟袖標軍號，
小販門簷插彩旗。
一事自然稱聖治：
鞭笞已繼肉刑除。

The two poems list a series of otherwise unrelated events, linked by the poet’s musical talents. She uses the rigorous style of the seven-character regulated poem to mediate the novel terms and noisy chaos in the modernizing capital, making them read naturally and light-heartedly, revealing her pleasure and optimism.

Xue’s poems about the political, economic, educational, and technological changes in the capital, as well as in some other big cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Tianjin, express her positive attitude towards reform and new models of governance. The

complicated motivation of the new governance that Cixi carried out after the Boxer Rebellion awaits more research and discussion. I am here interested in Xue's particular excitement about the end of corporal punishment, which Xue had persistently opposed since her early years. For instance, in 1890, her house in Fuzhou was robbed. After the thief was arrested, she presented a *ci* poem to the magistrate, requesting: "Although the administration has to carry out the law, / Please pass fair and proper sentence, / No need for whipping or flogging" (有司執法雖然也，且持平原情定罪，無勞笞打).[65] In 1898, during the campaign for women's education, Xue published an article in *Nüxue bao*, the first Chinese women's journal, entitled "On the Pertinence of Women's Education to the Principles of Reign" (*Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo* 女教與治道相關說). In this article Xue particularly celebrated Ti Ying 緹縈, a young girl of the Han dynasty who, in order to save her father, appealed to the Emperor Wen to abolish corporal punishment. While conventionally Ti Ying had been praised as a filial daughter, Xue emphasized her influence on Emperor Wen's political decision, and hence set her up as a role model for women's participation in political affairs. Through Ti Ying's example, Xue firmly embedded women's political ambition in their care for human life.[66]

Indeed, Xue's political ideal was founded primarily on such motherly considerations. As she built up her poetics, she also hoped to design an applicable scheme of political reform through epitomizing various programs. She expected that the entire nation could peacefully and smoothly transform itself into a democratic and republican society. In the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women*, she imaginatively transformed the world of Greek and Roman goddesses into an ideal women's republic.[67] Such an ideal can also be found in her poems. Her last long song, "Viewing the Lantern Show at the Front Gate of Beijing City" (*Qianmen guan denghui ge* 前門觀燈會歌), composed half a year before her death, offers us a conclusive view:

> Frosty moonlight shines over withered trees.
> Lanterns, hundreds upon thousands, line up along the road.
> Streets are full of excited people, and pipes blowing loud,
> Like glittering stars on tides, tossing here and there.
> . . .
>
> In the Forbidden City, horses and vehicles block the streets.
> People hold their breath, staring at the light of lanterns.
> I am going home to the east district on a carriage
> But cannot find my way through the crowds.
> . . .

My servant comes to me with the following words:
“The Zhou has chosen a lucky day to reform Heaven’s mandate.
The palace has announced the imperial edict, delighting the
students.
They are here to celebrate the coming of a prosperous period.”

I recall when I lived in Shanghai:
Lamplights bobbing in the Huangpu River from boats anchored
during an autumn night.
People were celebrating the hundred-year democracy of France,
But no one there reiterated its once hegemonic ambition.

Ruler and people always form the grand system together,
Managing millet, rice, hemp, silk, and things as such.
Although these lanterns look rather extravagant and luxurious,
Why would scholars criticize this expression of happiness?

A piercing wind suddenly rises, and snowflakes whirl down.
Stars disappear, the moon reclines, and lanterns are extinguished.
Coming home, I light the lamp and write down my poem,
On the night of the sixth day, the tenth month, of the year gengxu
(Nov. 7th, 1910).

霜月棱棱照枯樹，
千燈萬燈夾輦路。
人聲鼎沸笳聲粗，
星擁潮翻自來去。
. . .

禁城車馬塞堵牆，
共望燈輝屏呼吸。
我亦乘車返東城，
到此躊躇不得行。
. . .

仆夫攬轡前致辭：
“周命維新幸有期。
金吾傳令諸生喜，
預慶升平報答時。”

我憶曩時居海上，
歇浦秋燈夜蕩漾。

百年民政法蘭西，
不見遺風號霸王。

君民從來合大義，
粟米麻絲盡所事。
燈球揚厲縱鋪張，
處士如何有橫議？

酸風倏起雪花下，
星殘月落燈光謝。
歸去挑燈記苦吟，
庚戌十月乙亥夜。[68]

The lantern show, as Xue recounts here, was possibly held in celebration of two imperial edicts, announced respectively on November 4th and 5th, which proclaimed the opening of parliament in 1913, and appointed courtiers to draft the constitution and organize the cabinet. Students in Beijing naturally gathered to celebrate these court-approved reform programs.[69]

As manifested in this poem, Xue's idea of reform, *weixin*, embraced several value systems. First of all, she advocated "Zhouming weixin" (周命維新), or the Zhou's reform of Heaven's mandate.[70] She thus associated reform with the Chinese tradition, specifically the Zhou tradition that held the Confucian ideal of *wangdao* 王道 (the king's way of benevolence) as the core of governing, in contrast to *badao* 霸道 (hegemony by force) which often resulted from Western political reforms. (As mentioned in this poem, Xue wrote another poem about a Shanghai lantern gathering in 1906, in which she celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution and criticized Napoleon's hegemonic ambition.) Xue then combined the Chinese *wangdao* with French democracy as the ideal political system for China. This grand system (*dayi* 大義), as she proposed, should be built upon cooperation between the ruler and the people, in order to ensure the welfare of all.[71]

Xue's ideal of reform represented the viewpoints of many gentry members during the 1898 reform period. In fact, this group of late Qing gentry, such as the Chen brothers and their female relations, most convincingly discussed China's reform. They were, on the one hand, knowledgeable about Western politics, economics, law, culture, history, military, science, and technology. For example, Chen Jitong was "so familiar with French politics and Napoleonic Law that even the very learned French law scholars could not corner him."[72] Xue Shaohui often referred to French systems for examples of the Western tradition, evidently influenced

by her brother-in-law. On the other hand, these people had received solid training from the Chinese tradition. Chen Shoupeng, after studying abroad, passed the civil service exam and obtained the *juren* degree. They also had practical experience in managing business in a modern society, with skills in finances, diplomacy, education, and journalism. When necessary, they would insist upon the right thing at their own risk. Moreover, they were the first ones to bring women into the center of reform and to bring their voices out to the public through the newly emergent news media.[73]

Their ideas on reform and substantive efforts to move China towards modernity deserve the attention of modern historians. Because of their insistence on gradual change, however, they have long been eclipsed in the telling of modern Chinese history by more radical reformers such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. Thus, regrettably, the rich, complicated 1898 reform movement has been reduced into the Kang-Liang reform saga in modern Chinese historiography.

In the summer of 1911, Xue Shuhui died of a long-term illness. Four months later, the Republican revolution took place. The Chinese intellectual elite replaced a highly refined imperial system with an instant republic, in a way more radical than had been originally proposed by Kang and Liang.

Self-presentation and Self-transformation in Xue's Poems

Xue also used her poetry to present images of herself. From these self-presentations, primarily as wife and mother, we may obtain some new understandings of the relationships between men and women and of the ways in which women positioned themselves in society during the 1898 reform period.

As mentioned earlier, Xue was orphaned at a very tender age. Chen himself also lost both parents when he was young. Having heard of Xue's reputation as a poetic prodigy at the poetry bell gatherings, Chen sent a matchmaker to the Xue household, of which the actual head was none other than Xue Shaohui herself. Urged on by her elder sister, Xue accepted the proposal. Seen in this light, the future husband and wife entered the marriage of their own free will, and their expectations of the marriage were of intellectual equality and spiritual communication.[74] Shoupeng's understanding and support enabled Xue to continue her literary creation and scholastic learning. She would take care of the household during the day and, at night, "Study side by side [with Shoupeng] like two friends." Psychologically, therefore, she maintained her young girl's innocence and sincerity, as shown in her "Sentiments in Old Style" (*Guyi* 古意) (ca. 1880-1881):

I
To embroider two flowers on one stalk,
Needs a cocoon of two silkworms.
Never broken is the love silk,
Spring wind clips, but too blunt to cut it.
II
Tender hands pluck pure zither,
Tuning to the melody of narcissus.
He listens at my window;
His eyes meet mine, we smile.
III
He adores peach blossoms;
I like white butterflies.
Understanding needs no words;
It's in my painting, on a round fan.
IV
Elegant calligraphy writes pearls,
Composing the tune of the long-life girl.
Not wanting him to know,
I teach my parrot behind the curtain.

欲繡並蒂花，
先蓄同功繭。
不斷是情絲，
春風鈍刀剪。

纖手弄素琴，
初試水仙調。
郎倚隔窗聽，
相看作一笑。

郎愛碧桃花，
儂喜白蝴蝶。
相喻在無言，
畫上合歡箑。
密字寫珍珠，
譜出長命女。
故不使郎知，
隔簾教鸚鵡。[75]

Xue imitates the daring *yuefu* 樂府 folksongs of the Southern dynasties, expressing the love she shares with Shoupeng. This love, though between a

married couple, sounds more like the infatuated and passionate romance of two young lovers. However, unlike traditional *yuefu*, which usually depict a young girl pleasing her lover with her physical body, Xue attracts her husband through her varied talents. The four poems she wrote respectively depict the young girl's four kinds of talents: embroidery, music, painting, and poetry. She invests each with affectionate sentiment, founded on their mutual understanding.

Precisely because the couple built up their relationship on equal terms, Xue demanded Shoupeng's absolute loyalty. During the period from 1883 to 1889, while Shoupeng was studying in Europe, Xue reminded Shoupeng of his responsibility, in "To My Husband" (*Jiwai* 寄外):

> Do not change because of changing environment;
> Keep on what is difficult, and never give up.
> . . .
> Pines and cypress have their inborn nature,
> Standing firmly, against the coldness of winter.
> . . .
> Let's commemorate Laizi's wife;[76]
> She scolded her husband for abandoning farming.
> Ji's wife happily watered vegetable garden;
> Meng Guang shed off ornaments as a good beginning.[77]
> Alas we are but ordinary husband and wife,
> But we are soul mates, having the same heart.
> . . .
>
> 莫以見異遷，
> 黽勉爲其難。
> . . .
> 松柏有本性，
> 巍然淩歲寒。
> . . .
> 緬懷萊子婦，
> 匪屑輟耕起。
> 冀妻灌園樂，
> 孟光椎結始。
> 嗟嗟夫婦愚，
> 同心是知己。
> . . .[78]

Xue's concern that her husband might transfer his love to some other woman seems to have arisen from her observation of Chen Jitong's personal

life. Jitong had been married to Lady Liu before he met Lai Mayi in Paris, and the two lived together while Liu was still alive. In the summer of 1888, according to the account of Xue's children, Liu "died of a sudden ailment at her natal home (in Fuzhou), and gossip started circulating among relatives."[79] What ailment cost Liu's life, why did she die at her natal home instead of in the Chen household, and what kind of gossip and criticism circulated among relatives? The vague reports leave nagging questions about the circumstances of her death. As the Chen brothers were then in Europe, Xue alone dealt with this difficult situation and suppressed the controversy.[80] Although Xue had enormous respect for Jitong,[81] she evidently did not want to fall prey to a similar situation. This is probably why she made these demands on Shoupeng.

After coming back from Europe, Shoupeng for a while indulged in drinking parties, and often got drunk. Xue admonished him, but to no avail. She then "composed *qu*-lyrics using old *Kunqu* music, and taught the maids how to sing. She herself either played flute or clappers to adjust the beats." Whenever Shoupeng wanted to have a drink with friends, she would set up a banquet and entertain Shoupeng with a singing performance, so as to stop him from going out.[82]

This family story reminds us of a *Shishuo xinyu* episode, recorded in the chapter "Worthy Ladies" (*Xianyuan*). It tells how Lady Liu admonished her husband, the Eastern Jin prime minister Xie An 謝安, not to indulge in women and wine. Lady Liu was famous for being a *dufu* 妒婦 (jealous woman) because of her rigorous discipline of her husband, as recorded in the *Duji* 妒記 (Records of Jealous Women), a work contemporary with the *Shishuo*.[83] Yet the *Shishuo* author listed her among the independent, strong-minded, and talented Wei-Jin worthy women. Judging from various *Shishuo* episodes, the author seems to suggest that this sort of jealousy usually arose from strength of character or sincere feelings for their husbands, from whom they expected an equal response.[84] Whether intentionally or not, Xue emulated Lady Liu, manifesting her grasp of the spirit of the "Worthy Ladies."

In fact, both in poetic creation and in life, Xue intentionally continued the intellectual style of the Six dynasties, typified by the *linxia fengqi* 林下風氣, or "Bamboo Grove Aura."[85] When Chen Jitong first met with Xue Shaohui, then an 18 *sui* young bride, he appraised her as having a natural, sunny, and graceful manner. Xue herself also used this standard to inspire her daughters and evaluate foreign women.[86] Taking *xianyuan* 賢媛 instead of its counterpart, *guixiu* 閨秀, as one's model of self-fashioning was a general trend among the 1898 reform women, who often addressed themselves as *xianyuan* and took the "Bamboo Grove Aura" as the highest compliment for each other.[87]

In her early years, Xue's demands for equal status between husband and wife were concerned mainly with mutual love and understanding. She later broadened these concerns to include equality in conversations and discussions about nations and people. In the two prefaces they each wrote for their cooperative work, the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women*, Xue and Shoupeng openly argued about the standards of classifying and evaluating the Western women.[88] In the poem, "Watching a Circus Show" (*Guan maxi* 觀馬戲) (1909), Xue celebrated this newly imported form of Western performance as the restaging of an ancient and auspicious Chinese scene of peace and prosperity, describing the scene as "myriad beasts dancing in the court" (*baishou wu yu ting* 百獸舞於庭). Shoupeng mocked Xue's optimistic tone, pointing out that the Roman Empire invented this sort of show for directing people's attention away from the real problems of the state.[89] The significance of Xue's honest account of their argument lies not in whose opinion is correct, but in that the wife could and would publicize her argument with her husband on grand matters such as national destiny and people's minds. Evidently emboldened by conversations within the family, Xue became outspoken in public. Seen in this light, the equal status of men and women, which has been taken as a result of Western influence after the May Fourth movement, had already appeared during the 1898 reform era.

As a mother, Xue especially emphasized "mother's teaching" (*mujiao* 母教 or *muxun* 母訓), as exemplified in her two series of poems, "Teaching My Sons" (*Ke'r shi* 課兒詩) (1903) and "Instructing My Daughters" (*Xunnü shi* 訓女詩) (1904). Both advocated equal education for sons and daughters, but with an awareness of their physical and mental differences. These poems associated the education of children with the increasingly intensified global competition in politics, military, and technology. "Teaching My Sons" required her two boys to have the courage to "stand alone against ten thousand enemies" (萬人我獨往), and taught them "not to ignore the foreign bullying" (外侮不可罔).[90] The brief preface to "Instructing My Daughters" pointed out that the poem was written to respond to the call for women's education. This series of poems, drawing upon the *Book of Changes*, made it clear from the outset that "Men and women are born of the grand transformation, / From the same ether, but one translucent and the other opaque" (男女同化生，一氣分清濁). Then, under the general call for women's education, it repeatedly emphasized women's domestic duty. Finally Xue required her daughters, "To treat the young with motherly compassion, / To expand your love according to the actual situation" (慈祥以待下，推愛而准情). She also told them, "The straight Way accomodates most people, / Harmonious music has no hurried sound" (道直可容眾，樂和稀促聲). This expressed her hope that they

would extend their care for family to a much broader space.[91] These expectations of her daughters accorded with Xue's own principles.

Standing at the crossroads of past and present, Chinese and Western, and facing the complicated interaction of these various value systems, Xue's male contemporaries often felt very much perplexed. The situation imposed more hardship on women, since they also had to deal with the conflicts between the inner and outer domains, conventionally assigned to women and men respectively.

For Xue, the conflict came first between her female gender and the traditional male poetics that often disparaged tender and affectionate poems as girlish (*nülang shi* 女郎詩), as of the "style of rouge and powder" (*zhifen qi* 脂粉氣). In 1910, one year before she died, Xue edited her poems, saying: "All my life I have disdained the 'style of rouge and powder.' For the past thirty years, I have tried hard to eliminate it, yet it always comes back to haunt my ink-brush. Alas, how hard is the confinement of our womanhood!"[92] As a woman, however, Xue recognized that she could not separate literary creation from life experience. In her collection of poems, *zhifen qi* never seems a reason for excluding some of her own works. There are even lines such as "Having my hair dressed in a stylish fashion, / I listen to the street vendor, peddling fragrant flowers" (倩人梳就新興髻，聽賣街頭袋袋花).[93] As a matter of fact, Xue hardly tried to conceal her own or other women's female identity in her poems. More often than not, she depicted women's fragile appearance in order to set off their profound inner strength. For instance, in 1905, she wrote the poem "Inscribed on Wu Zhiying's [1868-1934] Calligraphy Scroll of Cursive Style" (*Ti Wu Zhiying caoshu hengfu* 題吳芝英草書橫幅) to celebrate this woman calligrapher:

> Zhiying is indeed a daughter of the Wu family.
> Valiant calligraphy startles wind and rain.
> Wielding ink-brush vibrates her hairpin;
> Tender wrist sends out sad swans' crying.
>
> 芝英亦是吳家女，
> 筆陣蒼茫動風雨。
> 想見揮毫鈿釵飛，
> 腕底哀鴻哭聲苦。[94]

Xue intentionally exposes Zhiying's female identity, typified by her hairpin and tender wrist. Yet, precisely from these delicate descriptions, the reader sees Zhiying's vigorous and compassionate inner world. Her vibrant hairpin reveals her anxiety for people's suffering, and her wrist rapidly

wielding the ink-brush, shows her eagerness to make known people's crying in her writing.

Another inner conflict that beset Xue involved her own understanding of the significance of women's poetic creation, and society's general indifference towards women's poetry. Lying on her deathbed, Xue said to Shoupeng: "Although women's words are not worthy of the attention of the world, I have been with you for a long time, and I recorded our life traces and implanted our emotions and souls in these poems. Each poem resulted from the hardships we both endured. No one knows me better than you do. Please preface this collection for me in the future!"[95] Of course, Xue never doubted the value of her poetry, for otherwise she would not have kept on writing. Seeing most women's works being "abandoned to wild mist and tangling weeds," however, Xue had to trust her works to her life-long soulmate. Shoupeng, for his part, proved his trustworthiness through the attentive editing and publication of his wife's works. Their joint effort shows that, even in a time when "women's words [were] not worthy of the attention of the world," there still existed obstinate women writers and their devoted male proponents. Ironically, modern scholarship about the 1898 reform era appears to have almost entirely forgotten Xue and many other women writers. Only the very few women writers and activists who meet the terms of the male-dominated discourse are portrayed, apparently in order to demonstrate the equality of men and women within this discourse.

The Confucian norm of "inner words do not go out" and women's desire to participate in political affairs caused Xue's biggest conflict. In the preface to "Eulogy to His Majesty Returning to the Capital," Xue wrote:

> Your female subject often stares at the capital from under the Southern Dipper. Diligently obeying the instruction that inner words should not go out, how could she know anything about contemporary affairs? However, having been transformed by Zhou poetry, she intends to serve this peaceful and prosperous time. She only regrets that she does not have the talent of compiling the Han history, for recording the grand events of the court.
>
> 臣妾每依南鬥，仰望京華。深守內言，詎知時局? 仰荷周詩之化，欲答升平；愧無漢史之才，敬書典誥。[96]

After 1897, Xue frequently published her essays of parallel prose in newspapers and journals, most of which commented on political affairs.97 She therefore broke the conventional rules that "women should not speak of

public affairs" (nü bu yan wai) and that "inner words should not go out" (neiyan bu chu).98 Her "Eulogy to His Majesty," in particular, commented directly on the future of the nation and the imperial reign. Xue defended her bold interference in state affairs, saying that she only intended to offer her services. Her sense of responsibility for the nation compelled her to break conventional norms, bravely contributing her ideas for the nation's benefit.
Xue Shaohui's life and work reveal the complexities and contradictions of fin de siecle China. "Liberation" was not a simple process, for Xue or anyone else. Enamored with tradition yet open-minded, strong-willed yet sentimental, rational yet passionate, down-to-earth yet imaginative, Xue exemplified the Chinese "New Woman" well before the term was coined in the New Culture era. A devoted mother, wife, and daughter, she (and others like her) extended these "domestic" notions to embrace the entire nation; her mission, in other words, became one of educating, nurturing, and protecting the Chinese people as a whole. And in the pursuit of this goal, reformers like Xue were eager to embrace any new knowledge and any new values capable of empowering the nation and the people.

Endnotes

* All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

1. According to Bing Fu's 病夫 (Zeng Pu 曾樸 [1872-1935]) preface to Chen Shoupeng's "Yiru yicong" 繹如譯叢, published in Zeng Pu ed., *Zhen mei shan* 真美善 2.6 (1928), Chen Shoupeng was still alive this year when Zeng went to him to collect his late brother Jitong's works.
2. See Chen Shoupeng, "Wangqi Xue gongren zhuanlüe" 亡妻薛恭人傳略, and Chen Qiang 陳鏘, Chen Ying 陳瑩, and Chen Hong 陳葒, "Xianbi Xue gongren nianpu" 先妣薛恭人年譜; both in Xue Shaohui, *Daiyun lou yiji* 黛韻樓遺集, including *Shiji* 詩集, 4 *juan*; *Ciji* 詞集, 2 *juan*; *Wenji* 文集, 2 *juan*; edited by Chen Shoupeng (The Chen family edition, 1914).
3. See Jing Yuanshan 經元善 ed., *Nüxue jiyi chubian* 女學集議初編 (Shanghai: Jing's private edition, 1898); Xue Shaohui, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu" 創設女學堂條議並序, *Qiushi bao* 求是報 9 (December 18, 1897): 6a-7b, and 10 (December 27, 1897): 8a-b; "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo" 女教與治道相關說, *Nü xue bao* 3 (August 15, 1898): 2a; Lai Mayi and Shen Heqing [Ying] 沈和卿[瑛], "Zhongguo nü xuehui shushu zhangcheng" 中國女學會書塾章程, *Xiang bao* 湘報 64 (May 19, 1898): 254a-255a; Xue Shaohui and Chen Shoupeng, trans., *Bashi ri huanyou ji* 八十日環遊記 [*Around the World*

in Eighty Days by Jules Verne] (Shanghai: Jingshi wenshe, 1900); ibid, trans., *Shuangxian ji* 雙線記 [*A Double Thread* by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler] (Shanghai: Zhongwai ribaoguan, 1903); *Waiguo lienü zhuan* 外國列女傳 (Nanjing: Jinling Jiangchu bianyi zongju, 1906); etc.

4. See *Waiguo lienü zhuan*, and Xue, *Daiyun lou yiji*.
5. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 1b.
6. Referring to Confucius 孔子, Yan Hui 顏回, Mencius 孟子, and Zeng Shen 曾參; cf. *Sishi xue* 四氏學 in *Ciyuan* 辭源, s.v. "*Si* 四."
7. The poetry bell (*shizhong* 詩鐘) was invented in Fujian. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu" records that, "The poetry bell started in the Daoguang reign. Our late grandfather and his peers . . . established a club at Wanzai Hall in the Small West Lake, and named it Feishe (Flying Society). They made a box [to contain poems]. Above the box they hung a bell, and linked a hammer to the bell with a string. They then tied a bunch of incense to the middle of the string and the lid of the box to its end. When the incense burnt out, the string broke, the hammer struck the bell, and the box closed. Poems written after this moment could not be put in" (5a-b). Also, according to Yi Zongkui 易宗夔, *Xin Shishuo* 新世說 (1918; reprint, Taibei: Mingwen shuju, 1985): "The poetry bell is a variant of "linked verse" [*lianju* 聯句] (*juan* 2, 40a-b).
8. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 2b-7a.
9. "Wenshu" possibly refers to the Qing painter Jiang Zhenhong 江振鴻 (fl. early 19th cent.), a native of Jiangdu (today's Yangzhou, Jiangsu province), who was skilled in landscape and flowers. See Yu Jianhua 俞劍華, *Zhongguo meishu jia renming cidian* 中國美術家人名辭典 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1980), s.v. Jiang. There are several painters with the courtesy name or studio title "Nanlou" found in *Zhongguo meishu jia renming cidian*. Among them the most likely one is probably the Qing woman painter Chen Shu 陳書 (1660-1736) of Xiushui (today's Jiaxing, Zhejiang province), who was skilled in plants, birds, and insects, since Xue always insisted on taking women poets and artists as the primary models for women's education. See Xue, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu," *Qiushi bao* 10 (December 27, 1897): 8a-b.
10. Chen Shoupeng, "Zhuanlüe," 2b-3a.
11. In composing *shi* poems, Xue advocated learning from the "Nineteen Old Poems" and the Tang and Song poets. See her "Poem on Teaching My Sons" (*Ke'er shi* 課兒詩), No. 16, *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 13a-16b.
12. As her brother Xue Yukun 薛裕昆 observed; see his preface to the *Daiyun lou ciji*, 2a.

13. Kong Yingda's 孔穎達 (574-648) *shu* 疏 interpretation to the "*qiongli jinxing*" from "Shuokua" 說卦, in *Yijing*, in Ruan Yuan 阮元, ed., *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, 2 vols. (1826; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), *juan* 9, 1:93. Xue drew upon this idea in concluding her "Poem on Teaching My Sons," No. 16.
14. Yi Zongkui, *Xin Shishuo*, "Liyan."
15. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, "Qianyan" 前言 to Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲, *Renjing lu shicao [jianzhu]* 人境廬詩草[箋注], edited by Qian Zhonglian, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), p. 4.
16. Liang Qichao, "Lun Nüxue," first published in *Shiwu bao* 時務報 23 and 25 (1896), collected in Jing Yuanshan ed., *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 56b-57a. This sort of criticism permeated through men reformers' arguments in promoting women's education; see Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 38b, 39a, 40a, etc.
17. Liang Qichao, "Lun Nüxue," 58a.
18. See, for example, Jing Yuanshan, "Quan Jinlingdu renshi chuangkai nü xuetang qi" 勸金陵都人士創開女學堂啓, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 41a.
19. Kang Tongwei, "Nüxue libi kao" 女學利弊考, *Zhixin bao* 知新報 52 (May 11, 1898), 2b.
20. See Xue, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu," *Qiushi bao* 9 (December 18, 1897): 6a-b. For a detailed discussion of Xue's argument with Liang Qichao, see Nanxiu Qian, "Revitalizing the *Xianyuan* (Worthy Ladies) Tradition: Women in the 1898 Reforms," *Modern China* 29.4 (2003): 425-426.
21. As recounted by Xue's eldest daughter, Chen Yun 陳芸 (1885-1911), in her self-preface to *Xiaodaixuan lunshi shi* 小黛軒論詩詩 (attached to Xue Shaohui's *Daiyun lou yiji*), 1a-b.
22. See Xue, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu," 6b.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid, 6b-7a.
25. Qian, "Qianyan" to the *Renjing lu shicao jianzhu*, 1:4-5.
26. Xue, "Songwai zhi Riben" 送外之日本 (1883), *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 3a.
27. Xue, "Jiwai" 寄外 [To my husband] (1886), *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 5a.
28. Xue, *Ciji*, *juan* A, 9a.
29. Ibid, 9b.
30. Ibid, 15b-16a.
31. Ibid, 14a-15b.
32. *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, "Qice" 齊策 VI, 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1985), *juan* 13, 1:472-473.
33. See Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記, "Song Weizi shijia" 宋微子世家.
34. Xue, *Ciji*, *juan* B, 5a.

35. The first school for women in all China was established in Ningbo in 1844, by the English woman missionary, Miss Aldersey; see Margaret E. Burton, *The Education of Women in China* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), p. 35; Xia Xiaohong 夏 曉 虹, *Wan Qing wenren funü guan* 晚清文人婦女觀 (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1995), p. 18. See these two works for detailed discussions of women's life and women's rights movement during the 1898 reform era. For a detailed account of the 1898 reformers' efforts to establish the first girls' school, see also Xia Xiaohong, "Zhongxi hebi de Shanghai Zhongguo nü xuetang" 中西合璧的上海 "中國女學堂" , *Xueren* 14 (1998): 57-92. For women reformers' function and their different attitudes from men reformers' in the 1898 campaign for women's education, see Nanxiu Qian, "Revitalizing the *Xianyuan* (Worthy Ladies) Tradition: Women in the 1898 Reforms." *Modern China: An International Quarterly of History and Social Science* 29.4 (October 2003): 399-454.
36. See Lai and Shen, "Zhongguo nü xuehui shushu zhangcheng," *Xiang bao* 64 (May 19, 1898): 254a.
37. See Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 15ab, 21b-22a, 44b-45a, 46b-47b.
38. See Xue, "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo," *Nü xuebao* 3 (August 15, 1898): 2a; Du Jikun 杜繼琨, "Zai tan *Nü xuebao*" 再談女學報, *Tushuguan* 4 (Beijing, 1963): 56.
39. See Burton, *The Education of Women in China*, pp. 110-111.
40. See Tang Zhijun 湯志鈞, *Wuxu bianfa shi* 戊戌變法史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), pp. 421-423.
41. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 3b.
42. A remarkably learned man and a productive writer, Chen Jitong published 7 books in French to introduce Chinese culture during his decade-long tenure as a diplomat in Europe. His legendary life alone deserves a book-long study on the formation of the self of the Chinese elite in the reform era. For a ground-breaking study of Chen Jitong see Catherine Vance Yeh, "The Life Style of Four *Wenren* in Late Qing Shanghai," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.2 (1997): 419-470. I shall also discuss him in greater detail in my book project on Xue Shaohui and her family.
43. Including two foreign novels: Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler's *A Double Thread*. See endnote 3.
44. See Xue, "Du *Songshi*," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 4b.

45. Xue's preface to "Huiluan song," *Wenji*, *juan* 1, 5a-b. Although *song* 頌, or eulogy, originated from the *Shijing*, it was later on often categorized as *wen* (prose).
46. Ibid., 7b.
47. See Jing Yuanshan, *Juyi chuji* 居易初集 (Macao: Jing's private pulication, 1901), *juan* 1, 1a-b; *juan* 2, 47a-49b; 53a-59b.
48. See Meribeth E. Cameron, *The Reform Movement in China, 1898-1912* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), pp. 55-57.
49. For example, Huang Zunxian, in a series of poems about Cixi and Guangxu's leaving and returning to Beijing in the Boxer Rebellion incident, never explicitly discussed reform. See his *Renjing lu shicao[jianzhu]*, *juan* 10-11.
50. "Refined tiger" (*xiuhu* 繡虎) alludes to Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), whose writings are beautiful and full of strength (*Ciyuan* 辭源 , s.v. *Xiu* 繡).
51. Fan, "Caiyun qu," in *Fanshan quanji* 樊山全集, *Xuji* 續集 (1913 ed.), *juan* 9, 4a.
52. Xue, "Laoji xing," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 7a.
53. A more broadly circulated version of the story had Caiyun associated with Queen Victoria's daughter, the German empress. See Sun Zhen 孫震 ed., *Sai Jinhua qiren* 賽金花其人 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1987), p. 143, n. 2. Xue followed this version.
54. For the "Willow branch" allusion, see Xu Yaozuo 許堯佐, "Liushi zhuan" 柳氏傳, collected in *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小說, edited by Wang Pijiang 汪辟疆 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1958, 1975), pp. 52-53.
55. To take Chinese and Western women as "sisters born of the same parents" (*tongbao zimei* 同胞姊妹) seemed a common ideal for the 1898 women reformers and their Western proponents (see Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chuban*, 12a). At the first meeting of the women's association, held on December 6, 1897, over 100 Chinese and Western women attended. Chen Jitong and Lai Mayi's daughter Chen Chao 陳超 (Banxian 班仙) composed the following poem: "Sisters meet, Chinese and Western; / Flowers bloom, scarlet and crimson. / For our love of blossoms far and near, / We wish spring breeze here and there" (中西萃薈此堂中，姊妹花開朵朵紅。爲惜天涯有凡卉，欲教到處遍春風). See Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 20b.
56. "Donger" 冬兒 seems to allude to the singing girl Donger in a poem by the Tang poet Zhang Hu 張祜; see *Tangshi jishi* [*jiaojian*] 唐詩紀事[校箋], 2 vols., commentary by Wang Zhongyung 王仲鏞 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1989), 2:1418.

57. Xue, "Laoji xing," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 8a. The Zhangtai willow (*Zhangtai liu* 章台柳) was an often-used Tang poetic image for a courtesan or a concubine; see also Xu Yaozuo, "Liushi zhuan."
58. Fan, "Hou Caiyun qu," as quoted in *Sai Jinhua qiren*, pp. 147-148.
59. Xue, "Laoji xing," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 8b.
60. Fan Zengxiang, "Caiyun qu," *Fanshan xuji*, *juan* 9, 7b.
61. Xue, "Xunnü shi," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 20a.
62. Shan Shili 單士厘 commented on Xue's "Laoji xing," saying: "This poem is much more detailed and accurate than Fan Zengxiang's "Caiyun qu," comparable to Wu Weiye's 吳偉業 (1609-1671) "Yuanyuan qu" 圓圓曲. Yet phrases such as 'to meet with this young friend' (*wangnian jiao* 忘年交), 'treating her to an imperial banquet' (*kai tianpao* 開天庖), and 'taking a photo side by side' (*xie zhaoying* 偕照影) reveal the poet's ignorance about the protocol on diplomatic occasions. . . . In brief, she was misled by the novel *Niehai hua* 孽海花." Quoted in Qian Zhonglian, *Qingshi jishi* 清詩紀事, 22 vols. (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chuban she, 1989), 22:16011-12. Xue composed this poem in 1902, and the author of *Niehai hua*, Zeng Pu, began working on this novel in 1905. Clearly, Xue could not have been misled by Zeng. On the contrary, both Xue and Zeng adopted the story from the same origin—the Chen brothers. From 1888 to 1892, when Hong Jun, along with Fu Caiyun, served as the ambassador to Europe, Jitong and Shoupeng were also there, with Jitong serving as consul to several European countries. Thus the Chen brothers' version of the Fu Caiyun story is comparatively reliable, as can be testified by Xue's accurate account of German history and political systems. Zeng Pu, for his part, acknowledged Chen Jitong as his great inspiration who stimulated his enthusiasm for literature; see Zeng's letter to Hu Shi 胡適, in *Hushi wencun* 胡適文存, vol. 3. (Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1920), *juan* 8, 1125-1139. In Chapters 31 to 32 of the *Niehai hua*, Zeng used Jitong's personal life as the basis of creation, describing his triangle relationship with his French wife and English lover. He also mentioned Jitong's acquaintance with Fu Caiyun; see *Niehai hua* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 292-315. Seen in this light, Xue possibly composed the "Laoji xing" under the influence of the Chen brothers, especially Jitong.
63. See Nanxiu Qian, "Classifying the Female West in Chinese: Xue Shaohui and the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women* (*Waiguo lienü zhuan*)." *Journal of Asian Studies*, forthcoming.
64. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 3, 16b.
65. Xue, *Ciji*, *juan* B, 6b.

Eagle-shooting Heroes and Wild-goose Hunters: the Late Tang Moment

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The significance of my title will become clear as the discussion progresses, but for those of you in Chinese Studies, you will of course think of Jin Yong's novel Shediao yingxiong 射雕英雄*, which drew its title from a passage in a lyric by Mao Zedong. Mao's lyric was using a common allusion that comes in two levels. The first level is found in the "Biography of Li Guang" in the* Shi ji*: a court eunuch was sent out to the great Han general Li Guang when he was on campaign. With a party of a few dozen men, the eunuch was out on the steppes when he encountered a group of three Xiongnu. The vastly superior Chinese party attacked the Xiongnu, who proceeded to ride around the Chinese party shooting, until many, including the court eunuch, were wounded. When the outraged eunuch reported the incident back to Li Guang, the general commented that the three Xiongnu must have been out eagle-shooting. He sent a detachment after the Xiongnu and captured them, and they had indeed been out to shoot eagles*

At this point we should observe the obvious, that shooting eagles is no easy matter—far more difficult than shooting court eunuchs, who are slower, larger, and closer to the ground. "Eagle-shooting" later was transformed into the set phrase "master of eagle-shooting," shediao shou 射雕手*; this phrase came from the* History of the Northern Qi*, where Hulü Guang, on a hunt with the Emperor, looked up and shot and brought down an eagle. Thereafter it became a standard figure of skill.*

What I am looking for here is a kind of Tang poetry that is overlooked or underappreciated in standard accounts of Tang poetry, but a kind of poetry that was enduringly popular for more than a millennium. It was, perhaps, popular because it formed the basis of a skill that could be studied, learned, and mastered. It was a skill that did not require that a poet find an entirely distinct voice and mode of poetry. It was, however, a skill within which we can distinguish among eagle-shooting, shooting wild geese (fat, slow, and low-flying) or missing altogether.

As we begin to get the "complete poems" of dynasties after the Tang, we realize that this kind of poetry always continued in the background, behind more famous names.

Around 837 Yao He 姚合, one of the most prominent poets of his day, completed his anthology of poetry entitled *Supreme Mystery* (*Jixuan ji* 極玄集). A fragment of the preface survives, in which Yao He says: "These are all the masters of eagle-shooting among poets; I hope to avoid posterity's disagreement regarding my further selection from their collections of those pieces that show the supreme mystery" (此皆詩家射鵰之手也。合於眾集中更選其極玄者, 庶免後來之非).

837 was the Kaicheng Reign of Emperor Wenzong. Wenzong's grandfather Xianzong had been the Yuanhe Emperor (806-820) and had presided over the single greatest reconsolidation of dynastic power since the An Lushan Rebellion in the middle of the eighth century. In 820 the forty-three year old Xianzong had died suddenly and of mysterious causes. Poisoning by court eunuchs was the favorite explanation, though it may have been the Emperor's own fascination with longevity drugs. Xianzong was followed by the brief reign of his son Muzong, an inconsequential, disinterested Emperor and a more certain victim of longevity drugs. He was followed by his teenage son Jingzong, whose favorite activity was hunting at night and having raucous drinking parties when he returned. In 827, after ruling only a few years, his eunuchs evidently decided that his self-indulgent stupidity was a liability and discreetly strangled him one night as he returned from relieving himself in one of his late night drinking parties. After an inner court struggle young Li Ang, Jingzong's brother, was put on the throne, destined to become the emperor Wenzong.

Wenzong never expected to become Emperor. He was a studious young man; and when he was made Emperor, he set out to try to be a very good Emperor. He understood that he had to break the power of his court eunuchs. This was no simple matter, since they controlled not only his physical person, they controlled the Shence Army, which was the military power in Chang'an. In 835 Wenzong almost succeeded in a plot to have them killed, but an unkind gust of wind, they say, blew aside the curtains and revealed armed men ready to fall upon the eunuchs. The eunuchs swiftly dragged the Emperor back into the Inner Palace, barred the gates, and unleashed the Shence Army. The bloodbath that followed led to an even greater consolidation of eunuch power. This was the famous "Sweet Dew Incident," and a new reign name was declared, Kaicheng, oxymoronically combining "beginning" and "completion"; I am tempted to translate it as "the beginning of the end."

Yao He's *Supreme Mystery*, compiled in the Kaicheng Reign, has several histories of poetry behind it. The Yuanhe Reign of Xianzong had been the culmination of what we now call the "Mid Tang," a period of diverse invention leading in many directions. Here we find some of the most distinctive poetic voices in the history of Chinese poetry: the strident harshness of Meng Jiao, the virtuosity of Han Yu, the fantasy of Li He, the social engagement and wit of Bai Juyi. By 837 most of those poets were dead; and those who survived, like Bai Juyi, were old men whose garrulous style was irritating to younger poets. From more than a thousand years perspective we may see a certain charm in Bai Juyi's ease; to some of his younger contemporaries he seemed to represent the utter ruin of poetic craft and the aesthetic discipline of form.

We now think of Tang poetry as a "history"; but when we look at the literary world of the 830s, they saw the famous Yuanhe poets as an aberration, and a poetic style continuing from the late 750s as the norm. For poetry lovers of the 830s there was no "Early," "High," "Mid" or contemporary "Late" Tang (of course, they could not imagine themselves as "Late"); there was "poetry" and there was the "Yuanhe style" 元和體. The history of poetry was not a series of changing styles or fashions as we might conceive it, but rather ongoing poetry, with a brief phase of aberration in the Yuanhe.

A few years after Yao He's anthology, Emperor Wenzong, the most poetry-loving Emperor of the Tang, took it in mind to establish a complete set of Hanlin Academy positions for poets. Court conservatives were outraged. Li Jue 李珏 offered the following critique:

> To establish Academicians of Poetry would look rather bad at the present moment. Moreover, poets are generally poor and unreliable men, ignorant of the nature of office-holding. Our current Hanlin Academicians are all men well-versed in letters; it is quite all right that Your Majesty peruses past and present writers and finds amusement therein. If you have questions, it is quite all right that you consult with your Academicians. Some time ago Your Majesty commanded Wang Qi and Xu Kangzuo to serve as attendant lecturers, and all the world felt that Your Majesty loved antiquity and honored scholars, that you were devoted to and encouraged simplicity and depth. I understand that Xianzong [the Yuanhe Emperor] wrote poetry, and that his style matched that of the ancients. But back then, certain frivolous fellows displayed their rhetorical gifts and decorated lines, and with a grandiose, tortuous, and obscure style they satirized current events. Thereafter their reputations were bruited about, and they called it the "Yuanhe

> Style." It was certainly not that imperial preferences then were for things like this. If Your Majesty now goes on to establish Academicians of Poetry, I worry very much that frivolous and inferior men will try to outdo one another in verses of ridicule, giving their attention to clouds, mountains, plants, and trees. And might this not get called the "Kaicheng Style?" Such a blemish on the imperial civilizing mission would indeed be no small matter.[1]

This is a fascinating text, both for the anxiety regarding difference that sees period style itself (and hence our whole notion of literary history) as a problem and for the poetic conservatism that is the desirable norm.

Such poetic conservatism was a strong force in the world of poetry for an entire century after the An Lushan Rebellion. When Gao Zhongwu 高仲武 compiled his poetry anthology *The Leisurely Atmostphere of the Restoration* (*Zhongxing xianqi ji* 中興閒氣集), in 785 or shortly thereafter, it is not surprising that he restricted himself to recent poems, composed between 756 and 779. Probably sometime between the ninth and twelfth year of the Yuanhe Reign (814-817), Linghu Chu 令狐楚 (766-837) compiled *Poems for Imperial Perusal* (*Yulan shi* 御覽詩).[2] The poems which Linghu Chu was offering for Xianzong's reading pleasure were again primarily from the same poets anthologized by Gao Zhongwu thirty years earlier.[3] As in Gao Zhongwu's anthology, *Poems for Imperial Perusal* consisted primarily of quatrains and regulated verse in the five syllable line. Absent are all the contemporary poets whom we now see as major figures. As those now famous Yuanhe poets in many ways all set themselves against the contemporary literary establishment, Linghu Chu, representing that very literary establishment, ignored them in turn. Linghu Chu would eventually become Li Shangyin's first patron and, as a patron he became a considerable force in poetry of the second quarter of the ninth century.

When, a half century after Gao Zhongwu's anthology, we have Yao He's *Supreme Mystery*, we find exactly the same late eighth century poets. This was a canon of major poets, though it is one we no longer recognize. There is, however, one difference that separates Yao He from his predecessors: Yao He included two poets from before the An Lushan Rebellion period, Wang Wei and Zu Yong 祖詠, both masters of polished regulated verse, giving an ancestry to the predominant representation of poets from the second half of the eighth century. Like the two earlier anthologies, Yao He's anthology includes primarily regulated verse in the five syllable line, as well as quatrains in the five syllable line.

The eccentric poets of the Yuanhe Reign gave us the canon of Tang poetry we now have. It was they who raised Du Fu and Li Bai to central positions and placed "High Tang" poetry over the last part of the eighth

century. In his famous 'Teasing Zhang Ji" 調張籍 Han Yu had compared the poetry of Li Bai and Du Fu to Great Yu, digging the channels for China's great river. It is a grand image of the poet as demiurge, and indeed the analogy between the poet and "cosmic fashioning," *zaohua* 造化, was common among the Yuanhe poets. It is this image of the work of poetry that we may contrast with a mastery of eagle-shooting, a skill of controlled precision.

It can hardly be an accident that the third poem in Yao He's anthology of "masters of eagle shooting" is Wang Wei's 王維 "Watching the Hunt."

Watching the Hunt

The wind is strong, the horn-bow sings,
the general is hunting east of Wei City.
The plants are sere, the hawk's eye keen,
snow is gone, horses' hooves move easily.
Suddenly they are past Xinfeng market,
then back around to Thinwillow Camp.
Turn and look where the eagle was shot—
a thousand leagues of evening clouds flat.

觀獵

風勁角弓鳴，
將軍獵渭城。
草枯鷹眼疾，
雪盡馬蹄輕。
忽過新豐市，
還歸細柳營。
迴看射鵰處，
千里暮雲平。[4]

This is one version of the "High Tang" at its best. The images present the evidence of the senses: the sound of a bow twanging in the wind, which is the particular sensory evidence of the hunt. The fact that the leaves are dried and have fallen from the plants gives the hawk a better view, and the absence of snow (either in patches on the ground or falling) lets the horses move more easily. The poem ends beautifully with a view of absence, a vast skyscape in the distance in which there was a hawk—a small bird to shoot, and smaller still from a distance—that is now not there. Wang Wei's poem illustrates one possibility for regulated verse, in which energy is represented under formal control, the precision of skill that masters dangerous force—

"eagle-shooting." It is probably the strongest poem in Yao He's anthology and an allegory of the poetic craft of "eagle-shooters."

Most of Yao He's poetic eagle-shooters belong to the past, from a century to a quarter century before Yao's anthology. To have Yao He's own day represented, we have to look to a future anthology, indeed an anthology that explicitly presents itself as the successor of Yao He's anthology of poetry. This is Wei Zhuang's *Further Mystery* (*Youxuan ji* 又玄集), from the turn of the tenth century. As Yao He's anthology represents the continuity of conservative poetic taste among elite circles for a half century, *Further Mystery* opens with Du Fu, Li Bai, and Wang Wei, reconciling the values of conservatives and Yuanhe radicals and beginning to look like the canon of Tang poetry we now know. What had occurred in between *Supreme Mystery* in 837 and *Further Mystery* at the beginning of the next century was the complete destruction of the social world dominated by the conservative elite, the repeated sack of Chang'an, and the reduction of the dynasty to a handful of courtiers and palace guards surviving at the whim of various warlords.

As Wei Zhuang's anthology was the sequel to Yao He's it included not only Wang Wei's "Watching the Hunt," but also its sequel, Zhang Hu's 張祜 poem probably composed in 820 right after the end of the Yuanhe Reign.

Watching His Excellency Li of Weibo in the Hunt

At dawn he goes out east of the district walls,[5]
dividing, encircling among the low grasses.[6]
Red banners unfurl toward the sun;
white horses dash into the wind.
Hand reaching to his back, he draws the metal barb,
bending, he draws the horn-bow.
Where ten thousand people point together,
a single goose falls from the cold sky.

觀魏博[何]相公獵

曉出郡城東，
分圍淺草中。
紅旗開向日，
白馬驟迎風。
背手抽金鏃，
翻身控角弓。
萬人齊指處，
一雁落寒空。[7]

Zhang Hu's poem has its own beauty, but it is an intensely theatrical poem, with Wang Wei's control but without Wang Wei's restraint. From encirclement we have the theatrical advance of red banners and white horses, focusing at last on the body of Military Commissioner Li, as he draws an arrow and bends his bow. The flight of that arrow is marked by ten thousand people pointing; the object of the arrow, the gaze, and ten thousand fingers is a wild goose falling from the sky. Shooting wild geese is not easy, but it is a skill considerably less than shooting eagles: wild geese are larger, fly lower and more slowly. In some ways it is the perfect analogy for Zhang Hu's poetic skill compared to that of Wang Wei, the eagle-shooter.

We should note that Yao He, our anthologist who would later compare earlier poets to "masters of eagle-shooting," was also at Weibo at roughly the same time and may have witnessed both the wild-goose hunt and Zhang Hu's little poem.

What had occurred between Wang Wei's masterful eagle-shooting and Zhang Hu's easier and splendidly staged wild-goose hunt was the Mid Tang, culminating in the Yuanhe Period, which can be summed up in another hunting scene with a much gaudier bird. The poem is not regulated verse at all, but an old-style poem in the seven character line by Han Yu, probably written around 799.

The Pheasant Takes a Hit

On the plain the fire has burned, now calm and utterly still,
a wild pheasant, dreading the hawk, rises then sinks back down.
The general wants, by his skill, to humble others—
he wheels his horse, bends his bow, holds back, not shooting.
The space gradually narrows, the watchers grow many,
the pheasant springs, the bow full-drawn, the sturdy arrow notched.
Dashing towards people, it rises up sharply over a hundred feet,
the red fletches and silver barb arc after it.
The general looks up smiling, his subalterns congratulate him
as the many colors, rent asunder, plummet before his horse.

雉帶箭

原頭火燒靜兀兀，
野雉畏鷹出復沒。
將軍欲以巧伏人，
盤馬彎弓惜不發。
地形漸窄觀者多，

雉驚弓滿勁箭加。
衝人決起百餘尺，
紅翎白鏃隨傾斜。
將軍仰笑軍吏賀，
五色離披馬前墮。[8]

Here we can see the more recent ancestor of Zhang Hu's poem, with an even more explicitly staged scene of mastery, in which the landscape has been burned bare of everything but bird, performer, audience and arrow. What distinguishes Han Yu's poem from those of the earlier and later poet-craftsmen, Wang Wei and Zhang Hu, is the self-conscious and explicit pride in mastery: "the general wants, by his skill, to humble others." At the successful shot the general smiles; he is aware not only of his own skill but of the clapping audience. The prey ends up as a brightly colored trophy, pierced by the arrow, lying on the ground at his feet.

I hope my illustrations and allegory of the history of Tang poetry are clear. It was, after all, not I but Yao He who first compared mastery of the poetic craft to eagle-shooting. And it was Yao He who, in his selections, restricted the eagle-shooters to past poetry. The new poets, turning back to the craft of regulated verse after the Yuanhe Reign, were indeed wild-goose shooters: they were practicing a comfortable and easy craft, often with great success. Their craft was a theatrical one, but with less self-conscious mannerism and exaggeration than the Mid-Tang poets.

Yao He represents a poetic conservatism that continued through the Yuanhe Reign into the second quarter of the ninth century, which we call "Late Tang." His name was commonly linked to that of Jia Dao 賈島 whose poetic career spanned and embodied the transition from the Mid-Tang to the Late Tang. In the Tang social world, Yao He had good connections and was on an upward career path; his friend Jia Dao was quite different. Jia Dao had originally been a monk of Fanyang, near modern Beijing. His religious name had been Wuben 無本. Visiting first Luoyang and then Chang'an in the early Yuanhe Reign, he fell under the spell of Han Yu and his group; renouncing his religious vows, he tried to make his way in the political world—with very little success. Some of his early poems are highly mannered and clearly show the influence of the Han Yu group. In these poems he is very much part of contemporary literary and cultural history. Jia Dao is not, however, remembered for such poems. Jia Dao outlived Han Yu and Meng Jiao; and at some point in the latter part of the Yuanhe Reign he turned his attention entirely toward regulated verse in the five syllable line and the craft of the couplet.

Jia Dao has been remembered mostly for the apocryphal anecdote in which he was trying to make a choice between the words "shove" (*tui* 推),

and "knock" (*qiao* 敲), in a line, giving us the later term for decisions of poetic craft, *tuiqiao*. He is also remembered for some stylistically daring lines that bridge the mannerism of the Yuanhe poets and the craft of regulated verse.

In his turn to regulated verse in the five-syllable line Jia Dao was situating himself in a lineage of poet-monks who had been practicing this craft since the period after the An Lushan Rebellion. Only a small proportion of this tradition of works by poet monks survives, but we have enough poems and comments to recognize its extent and prestige. These poet-monks were the companions of the Dali Masters and other secular regulated verse poets of the second half of the eighth century, and they figure with their secular counterparts in Yao He's *Supreme Mystery*. Although Jia Dao himself renounced his Buddhist vows, his cousin, Wuke 無可, remained a monk and a practitioner of such verse like Jia Dao himself.

The Yuanhe poets clearly prized a certain flamboyance and self-advertisement of personality. The aesthetics of regulated verse in the five syllable line, particularly as practiced by the poet-monks could not have been more different. Such poetry represented an *askesis*. The relationship between the strict observance of the rules of craft (*lü* 律) and the *vinaya* (*lü*), the discipline that governs the *sangha*, the Buddhist monastic community, is suggestive; as the ninth century progressed, the analogy between Chan meditation and the reflective process of poetic composition became commonplace. The *askesis* of the poetic craftsman was, in many ways, a satisfying secular counterpart of the *sangha*, where a discipline with strict rules was the medium through which one could shed a secular identity. In striking contrast to the Yuanhe poets, for whom establishing poetic identity was central, the craftsmen of regulated verse are remarkably impersonal, even in their expressed sentiments.

In January 816, the last lunar month of the tenth year of the Yuanhe Reign, the Chan monk Baiyan 白巖 ("Cypress Cliff") passed away. On hearing the news, Jia Dao composed a regulated verse, one of whose couplets became famous because Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 made it an exemplary case of the potential misreading of poetry.

Lamenting the Monk Baiyan

The moss covering your stone couch is fresh,
how many springs did the Master occupy it?
They copied and kept your shadow, practicing the Way,
burned away the body that sat in meditation.
The pagoda garden bars snow on pines within;
the sutra chamber locks in dust in the cracks.

I despise that this pair of tears streams down,
I am not one who understands the Emptiness of things.

哭柏巖和尚

苔覆石牀新，
師曾占幾春。
寫留行道影，
焚卻坐禪身。
塔院關松雪，
經房鎖隙塵。
自嫌雙淚下，
不是解空人。[9]

The famous couplet here is the second one, imitated within a few decades, anthologized in Wei Zhuang’s *Further Mystery* at the end of the ninth century, and taken up again in the eleventh century in Ouyang Xiu’s *Remarks on Poetry* (*Shihua* 詩話), where it comes up in a discussion of how a poem can fail to communicate some meaning in an elementary sense. Ouyang Xiu cites the couplet:

They copied and kept your shadow, practicing the Way,
burned away the body that sat in meditation.

寫留行道影，
焚卻坐禪身。

Then he comments that some readers thought that they had burned a living monk.[10] Ouyang Xiu cites the case as a joke; and in a nice twist, he turns from poetry failing to make sense to the foolish failure of readers to make sense of poetry. There is something here about reading poetry and attention to traces.

The figuration in the second couplet exists only in a language without tense markers; it necessarily disappears in English translation. Chinese poetry, especially on the level of a single line, assumes a unity of time; and that assumption produces the potentially comic effect that Ouyang Xiu mentions: if there is “sitting in meditation” and “burning,” one would normally take these as contiguous moments. The good reader, however, would recognize that the play between different moments in time was already announced in the third line, where the time of “practicing the Way” and the continued presence of the image are contrasted. To repeat that antithesis between present and past in the fourth line is a small triumph of

parallelism. Such a conflation of moments—the body in meditation and its cremation—is significant as well as poetically striking. The body in meditation is the vessel of a mind that is empty in being aware of the emptiness of appearances; it is that same body, empty of mind and soul, that is later cremated, literally "burned away."

In many ways this poem represents the shared craft of regulated verse in the five syllable line at its best, with a characteristic Mid-Tang inflection in the second couplet. The balance of level and deflected tones is perfect, the parallelism is technically skillful, and the rhyme-words are commonplace in the extreme. In some ways it was a comfortable and easy craft, within which the poet could sometimes achieve a remarkable beauty of pattern, pattern which could be significant. Every poetic form has its particular gift to poets. In regulated verse we often see a particular pattern or relationship recurring in various versions; and, as with metaphor, such homologies of pattern invite us to consider otherwise very different phenomena as in some way alike.

There is covering and ground, surface and depth. The covering is "appearance," in Buddhist terms, *se* 色, *rupa*, the sensuous surface of things. The surface changes; beneath is emptiness. Even the monk's name repeats this figure, "Cypress Cliff," the stone ground covered with the green of cypress, which in miniature reappears in the stone couch covered by moss. The moss replaces the monk, meditating presence kept the moss away. Moss and monk are both "coverings" and "overlays" of sorts, the loss of one being the gain of the other. Every spring that the monk sat on that bench—the enumeration of years that the second line invokes—was a spring when the moss could not grow. It was always there, always awaiting regeneration, like the tears that the poet sheds at the end.

The absent body is preserved as an "outline," reflection," or "shadow" (*ying* 影), the merest of appearances preserved in a representation, just another "image" in the "doctrine of images" (*xiangjiao* 象教), that teaches us through images the emptiness of the world beneath the images. The shadow is preserved while the body that cast the shadow is gone—an early eighth century anticipation of the pathos of the old photograph, enriched by the fact that the "reflection" or "shadow" is of the monk "practicing the way," learning within that surface of appearances the truth that all within is empty. The "body sat in meditation," became aware of Emptiness; and when that enlightened body died, it was burned and became smoke.

The ashes of the body go to the pagoda, in whose winter garden the pines have a covering of snow, pines being the standard figure for that which endures through change. As the body's ashes go to the pagoda, the painting of the body goes to the library where we have another covering of surfaces, a covering of dust, much like a covering of snow. But "dust" has

strong Buddhist overtones of the "six dusts," the delusions of the senses, the attachment to images as surfaces rather than as self-consuming indices of the emptiness beneath the surface.

Through the habitual poetics of regulated verse, Jia Dao is "parsing" surface and depth in various versions: moss, body, snow, and dust. And at the end we have the tears, both as a response and as a cleansing. Something comes forth from within the body that should be emptied, the trace of mind not as mirror but as the sentimental heart. Failure to understand Emptiness is the claim of the secular man, who feels the loss of the person—even though he knows that any particular incarnation is only a moment in a continuous process of reincarnation. Poetically he says "I despise" the fact that I weep. He knows better. He does understand the emptiness of things, but he does not accept it.

It is difficult not to read the contradiction of poetics here as well: the showy daring of the Yuanhe poet working in a poetic discipline and representing the truth of a religious discipline that teaches the emptiness and extinction of self.

Before considering the direction that Jia Dao's poetry was to take, I would like us to look at an imitation by the younger poet Zhou He 周賀, originally a monk and probably still so when he wrote the following piece. The poem cannot be dated precisely, but judging from Zhou He's career, it probably postdates Jia Dao's poem by at least a decade at the very earliest.

Lamenting the Monk Xianxiao

On the forests paths the west wind blows hard,
pine boughs after reading sutra and explanation.
His icy whiskers were shaved the night he died,
the remaining *gatha*, written when he was sick.
The ground was scorched after they cremated the body;
the hall was empty when first revealed his outline.
Lamenting him, tears often fall,
and I recall that he came to my cottage.

哭閑霄上人

林徑西風急，
松枝講鈔餘。
凍髭亡夜剃，
遺偈病時書。
地燥焚身後，
堂空著影初。

弔來頻落淚，
曾憶到吾廬。[11]

In the third couplet of this poem Zhou He is obviously imitating Jia Dao’s second couplet, but the epigone tropes on his predecessor in less obvious ways as well. Jia Dao opened with a stone bench covered with moss, a visual trace of absence. In the categories of parallel matching, Jiao Dao’s is a couplet of “seeing” (*jian* 見). Zhou He gives the proper answering category of “hearing” (*wen* 聞) for his trace of absence: the sound of the wind in the pines that marks the disappearance of Xianxiao’s sutra chanting and discourses.

The second couplet continues the motif of remainders, now the whiskers and the *gatha*, the devotional verse. I assume that the corpse is shaved (hence “icy” whiskers). In the third couplet Zhou He takes up Jia Dao’s earlier couplet; and in this case it would be hard to argue that the mannered and daring images of the Mid Tang disappeared entirely in the Late Tang. Here the epigone poet carries the image of the predecessor to new extremes. *Ying* 影 is “shadow” and “reflection”; the term was used for religious representations, hence the “hall of reflections,” *yingtang* 影堂, was where religious painting were displayed. Zhou He keeps the explicit reference to the portrait, but he adds another kind of grotesque “shadow” of the monk in the scorching on the ground left from the cremation of the corpse.

As Jia Dao had wept, so too Zhou He must weep the tears of the secular man. Zhou He, however, is not offering a grand opposition of his tears in contrast to those who understand the emptiness of things. Zhou He weeps from a memory of a visit, a remembered presence in face of Xianxiao’s absence.

Jiao Dao’s famous couplet represents the “strong line” in a Mid-Tang sense of the term, as Zhou He’s imitation shows how easily such lines can slip into almost comic grotesqueness. It was a style that Jia Dao was abandoning for a very different kind of “strong line” that characterizes the Late Tang. Already in 812 Han Yu had remarked that Jia Dao would turn away from mannered daring to a more “bland and even,” *pingdan* 平淡, style.[12] The “bland and even” best characterizes Yao He’s selection of earlier regulated verse in *Supreme Mystery*, and it characterizes most of Jia Dao’s lines. But as Jia Dao matured as a poet, he found a new kind of poetic beauty.

The following poem is also regulated verse in the five syllable line and also for a Buddhist monk. This poem can probably be dated to the Taihe Reign (827-35). By conventional periodization it belongs in the “Late Tang,” just as the lament for Baiyan belongs to the “Mid-Tang.” There is

something a bit absurd in giving different period names to two poems written by the same poet in the same form, both in a Buddhist social context, separated by one or two decades. Yet the contrast between the two poems seems to bear out the notion that a change in poetic sensibility had occurred in the interim.

The later poem lacks the modestly figurative couplet that caught Ouyang Xiu's attention, the couplet that was to become one of the touchstones of Jia Dao's craft. The poem also lacks the repeated patterns that function like metaphor.

Sent to Reverend Mo of White Tower Mountain

I know you have gone back to White Tower,
I watch that hill far in the clear evening sky.
In a stone chamber man's mind grows still,
on an icy pond moonbeams barely remain.
Wispy clouds melt, dividing in puffs,
ancient trees dry, shedding kindling.
Who hears chimes in the last part of night?—
cold is the highest summit of the western peak.

寄白閣默公

已知歸白閣，
山遠晚晴看。
石室人心靜，
冰潭月影殘。
微雲分片滅，
古木落薪乾。
後夜誰聞磬，
西峰絕頂寒。[13]

Reverend Mo is literally "Reverend Silence," and except for the peculiar question in the seventh line—asking, perhaps rhetorically, who hears chimes at a time when chimes would not be rung—the poem is one of silence.

Like the lament for Baiyan the poem begins with an image of absence as the poet stares toward the distant mountain to which Reverend Mo has gone. The images in the middle couplets all belong to that imagined distance. The stillness (*jing* 靜) is both the silence of the place and the serenity of mind, an enclosure stone that contains a mind rather than a body. In the capping line of the couplet Jia Dao flattens the space of containment

into a two-dimensional surface, playing on the Buddhist figure of the mind as a mirror, which in turn is the figure of the calm pool reflecting the moonlight. And the light is fading in that mirroring pool. The distance of speculation opens a space for images of nature and the person to merge. Self is obliterated here more effectively than in the lament for Baiyan.

In many ways this is a more beautiful and subtle poem than "Lamenting the Monk Baiyan." The fading daylight that opens the poem becomes fading moonlight in a pool that is the figure of the dispassionate mind. The third couplet continues the image of dissolution, first with light clouds breaking into pieces and disappearing (*mie* 滅 being, of course, the term for "extinction" in Nirvana), then in the trees shedding pieces of dry wood, specifically "kindling," the material for fire that will consume itself and the material body in a brief light. In the end we have an unheard sound in the darkness, the sound that is again the image of the immateriality of existence, until at last there is only cold.

Such regulated verse in the five-syllable line has a restrictive lexicon, and poems on monks have their own favorite images and terms. There is nothing daring in Jia Dao's poem here; it is, in some ways, highly conventional in the poetic practice of the age. Yet the images are deployed with a mastery of the craft that is as self-effacing as it is perfect.

During the 720 and 730s younger poets flocked to make the acquaintance of Yao He and Jia Dao, who duly celebrated their journeys, failures, and successes. Unlike so many "minor" poets of the eighth century we have their collections either complete or in substantial part. Such poets, often paying tribute to Jia Dao, continued to appear throughout the ninth century. The reason for their survival was their continuing popularity. They were, by and large, not the poets mentioned in serious accounts of the history of Tang poetry in prefaces, nor were they accorded more than minor status in anthologies like Gao Bing's 高棅 (1350-1423) 1393 *Tangshi pinhui* 唐詩品彙, which ranked and organized poets by period. These were the poets, however, who figured prominently in compositional anthologies like the Southern Song *Tang santi shi* 唐三體詩, the Yuan *Yingkui lüsui* 瀛奎律髓 (combining Tang and Song regulated poems), *Tang guchui* 唐鼓吹, and a host of other anthologies. The *Tang guchui*, a very popular anthology indeed judging by the number of editions, is restricted to regulated verse in the seven syllable line: it begins with Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi, then moves to Xu Hun, which makes no sense in any history of Tang poetry. What is of particular interest about these anthologies is their focus on late eighth and ninth century poetry and their relative indifference to those considered "major figures." Du Fu, Li Bai, and Han Yu may have received commentaries, but these "minor" poets accumulated a large body of critical comment on fine judgments of craft. When Ming plays combine lines of

Tang poets to cap a scene (always in the seven syllable line), it is usually from such late eighth- and ninth-century poets. Poetry manuals (*shifa* 詩法) and "illustrative couplets" (*jutu* 句圖) favor them. Their continuing popularity was the unstated cultural fact in the background of orthodox fulminations against the Mid and Late Tang from Yan Yu through the Ming archaists. This was another "Tang poetry" whose very existence has been all but forgotten, relegated to a few lines or paragraphs in histories of literature. Even the "Late Tang" is no longer theirs: Qing critics gave the period to Du Mu and Li Shangyin, who could be taken as "serious" in the way Qing critics liked poets to be serious.

To learn to love such poets is to think of poetry in a way very different from the way we think of the "major" poets. It is to accept poets who all sound very much alike, whose regulated poems in the seven character line sound more distinct from their poems in a five character line than they sound distinct from a poet writing seventy years later in the same form. To learn to love them is to accept the same images appearing over and over again, where the triumph is in pattern and choice of words. To learn to love them is to have no biography to speak of as a context to frame poems. Whether they are shooting eagles or slower and larger wild geese, theirs is a skill which has little to do with their names and life stories; it is a skill that appears at a certain moment within history but can be linked to history only in a troubled way. When Jia Dao wrote in the early 820s the empire had gone through a long phase of reconsolidation and seemed a strong and durable presence that would endure. Writing eighty years later, Wei Zhuang does not sound all that different; but Chang'an and the dynasty were in ruins. One might easily interpret the earlier as the voice of an age of peace and the latter as *wangguo zhi yin* 亡國之音, the "tones of a fallen kingdom." Unless I knew which poet wrote which poem, however, I could not tell them apart. This then is "poetry" in a key that has no place any more in how we read literature and the way literature is taught.

Endnotes

1. Wang Dang 王讜, *Tang yulin jiaozheng* 唐語林校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), p. 56.
2. Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, ed., *Tangren xuan Tangshi xinbian* 唐人選唐詩新編 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1996), p. 363.
3. There are some surprises (ten poems from the Daoist eccentric Gu Kuang 顧況), but the only inclusion of a now well-known Mid Tang poet is one quatrain by Zhang Ji 張籍.

4. Chen Tiemin 陳鐵民, *Wang Wei ji jiaozhu* 王維集校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), p. 609.
5. That is, the seat of government and headquarters for the Weibo military region.
6. Hunts used beaters to cover an area and drive animals in toward the center, where they could be easily killed.
7. Yan Shoucheng 嚴壽澄, *Zhang Hu shiji* 張祜詩集 (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 1. The title as it appears in *Further Mystery* has an officer surnamed He as the recipient; in the collected poems the title is given as "Watching Li Minister of Works of Xuzhou on the Hunt" 觀徐州李司空獵. The title in *Further Mystery* is probably in error and should be Li rather than He. This is probably Li Su 李愬 and the year was probably 820. Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, ed., *Tang Wudai wenxue biannian shi* 唐五代文學編年史, vol. 2 (Shenyang: Liaohai chubanshe, 1998), p. 808.
8. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 韓昌黎詩系年集釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), p. 111.
9. Qi Wenbang 齊文榜, *Jia Dao ji jiaozhu* 賈島集校注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2001), p. 89.
10. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Ouyang Yongshu ji* 歐陽永叔集, vol. 5 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), 14.116.
11. *Quan Tang shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 15.5724.
12. "Song Wuben shi gui Fanyang" 送無本師規范陽. *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 韓昌黎詩繫年集釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984, 1998), p. 820.
13. Qi Wenbang 齊文榜, *Jia Dao ji jiaozhu* 賈島集校注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2001), p. 110.

History, Poetry, and the Question of Fictionality

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The four functions of poetry as Confucius defined them in *Lun yu* or the *Analects* xvii.9—*xing*興, *guan*觀, *qun*群, *yuan*怨—are certainly very well-known in traditional Chinese criticism, but their exact meaning is not all that clear. What I am interested in here is the second function that Confucius called *guan*, literally to watch or to observe, and variously translated as poetry can be used "to show one's breeding,"[1] "to observe,"[2] or "to observe [people's] feelings."[3] The translations—and in fact the original text—are not very helpful as they are too brief to answer the questions of who is doing the observation and what is being observed. For better help, we may turn to traditional commentaries, and a very useful one is Liu Baonan's 劉寶楠 (1791-1855) *Correct Meaning of the Analects* (*Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義). In that book, Liu first cites Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127-200) commentary on the term *guan* as "to observe the rise and fall of customs" (觀風俗之盛衰); and then he gives his own explanation, saying that "to learn poetry enables one to understand the world" (學詩可論世也). He supports his explanation by further citations:

> It is said in the *Great Preface to the Book of Poetry*: "The sound of a well governed age is peaceful and jubilant, indicating a harmonious situation in governance; the sound of a chaotic age is plaintive and resentful, indicating an aberrant situation in governance; and the sound of a vanquished country is anguished and mournful, indicating that people are suffering." As the ages differ in their situations of governance, the sounds are also different as a result, so the study of poetry could let one observe people's customs and learn about their rise or fall.
>
> 詩序云：治世之音安以樂，其政和；亂世之音怨以怒，其政乖；亡國之音哀以思，其民困。世治亂不同，音亦隨異。故學詩可以觀風俗，而知其盛衰。[4]

From this commentary we understand that the observer is the one who listens to the sounds of an age, namely poems sung by people in various communities; and what is being observed is the political situation or moral condition of a certain time represented in the poems. This idea implies that poetry is strictly mimetic in the sense that it reflects the condition of a society and its people, holding, as it were, a mirror up to nature. By mimetic I am referring to Plato's view of poetry or arts as mimesis and as producing images in a mirror (e.g., *Soph*. 239d, *Rep*. 10.596d). It seems that some scholars in Chinese studies have fundamentally misunderstood Plato's view on poetry and representation by arguing that Plato's theory of mimesis is based on a dualistic outlook of reality and fictionality, and that such a dualism is uniquely Western, while in China, such a concept of fictionality does not exist because poetry and historical reality are not sufficiently differentiated, but are almost one and the same.[5] That view is mistaken on both counts because, on the Chinese side, the idea of fictionality is not only a feature of Chinese poetry, but also inhabits, as I shall show later, Chinese historical writing; and then, on the Greek side, Plato "never in fact works with this concept [of fictionality]," as G. R. F. Ferrari argues. In several dialogues touching on the issue of poetry or mimesis, Plato's concern—"What dominates his thinking about poetry (and art in general),"— Ferrari goes on to say, "is not fictionality but 'theatricality'. . . . Fictionality belongs to the artistic product; theatricality belongs to the soul. And by thinking of poetry in terms of theatricality rather than fictionality, Plato makes poetry through and through an ethical, not an aesthetic affair."[6] Plato, in other words, is not thinking about whether poetry is real or not, but whether it is good in its moral influence and social effect. With this ethical concern, Plato is a whole lot closer to Confucius in thinking about poetry than many of those scholars would lead us to believe.

The function of poetry as *guan*, or representation of the social and moral conditions of a given age for "observing the rise and fall of customs," was institutionalized in Chinese antiquity. As Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) wrote in the section on literature and arts of the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu, Yiwenzhi*漢書・藝文志): "In ancient times, there were officials who collected poems for the kings to observe customs, to learn about gains and losses, and to make appropriate adjustments and rectifications" (古有采詩之官，王者所以觀風俗，知得失，自考正也).[7] According to traditional commentators, the first part of the *Book of Poetry* itself, the so-called *guo feng* (國風) or "Airs of the States" in this Confucian classic, was just such a collection of poems that became vehicles in a two-way traffic of communication, with which "the rulers tried to influence their subjects down below, while the common people expressed their views and discontent to the rulers high up at court" (上以風化下，下以風刺上).[8] Thus

poetry was considered a valuable source of information, to be collected by officials specifically appointed to the task, and presented to rulers for consultation.

As already mentioned above, the idea that poetry has a close connection with historical reality and can be used as a sign to read the times may have led some scholars to believe that Chinese poets write about reality or real life experiences that are historically verifiable. They claim that the famous distinction Aristotle made between history and poetry—that "the former relates things that have happened, the latter things that may happen,"[9]—does not exist in China. They further argue that the distinction between history and poetry, or reality and fictionality, is uniquely Western, based on a sort of Platonic dualism, while Chinese poetry is essentially historical because it is embedded in concrete things and real situations and concerned with literal truth rather than a transcendental meaning. Since, in this critical view, history and poetry are put in an opposition as factual account and fictional creation, the "nonfictional" Chinese poetry naturally falls under the category of historical discourse. "The traditional Chinese reader had faith," as Stephen Owen puts it very clearly, "that poems were authentic presentations of historical experience." To be sure, whether a Chinese poem does indeed present the authentic historical truth is a mystery often buried in the remote past beyond recovery, but Owen argues that the "faith" here refers to "the inclinations of readers and of a poet's anticipation of those inclinations."[10] In other words, he argues that to consider poetic statements as historically verifiable is the habitual expectation in a Chinese way of reading. "The Western literary tradition has tended to make the boundaries of the text absolute, like the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*, a world unto itself," says Owen. "The Chinese literary tradition has tended to stress the continuity between the text and the lived world."[11] In these words, Western and Chinese literary texts are brought into a contrast between self-contained fiction and factual account embedded in historical reality. The shield of Achilles Homer described in book XVIII of the *Iliad*, perhaps the most famous example in Western literature of *ekphrasis* or verbal description of a nonverbal object, is a fictional shield on which a marvelously imaginative picture of both the natural cosmos and the human world are cast in words.[12] The shield of Achilles becomes a symbol of Western poetry, indeed the symbol of symbols, "a world unto itself," redolent of metaphorical and metaphysical meanings. The Chinese poem, on the other hand, is not an autonomous world at all; it is part of the lived world to which the poem refers and in which both its structure and meaning are grounded. According to this critical view, Chinese poetry is essentially a discourse of history.

There is a great deal to be said for the historical grounding of Chinese

poetry. History is important not just as the general background or social condition of the writing and reading of literature, but it often serves as the immediate context of the literary text, the occasion for composing a poem to express feelings and thoughts as responses to that particular occasion. Many Chinese poems are thus occasional poems, arising from a particular moment in the poet's lived experience and turning that experience into the very material for poetic articulation and reflection. The works of the great Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) are often referred to as a "history in verse" (詩史) because many of his poems draw a vivid picture of the life and times from what is known as the high Tang to the late Tang, especially the war and suffering around the year 755 when the corruption at court and the rebellion led by An Lushan 安祿山, an ambitious general of Turkish origin, precipitated the Tang empire into its speedy decline. Here is a good example of the use of poetry "to observe," that is, to let the ruler, his officials, and by extension all the literati readers observe and see, in the collected poems, intimations of the customs and mores of the times. Poetry is thus considered valuable because of such a moral and political use. Again, as Confucius put it: "Inside the family there is the serving of one's father; outside, there is the serving of one's lord" (邇之事父，遠之事君).[13] The close involvement of poetry with politics in the Chinese tradition and the appreciation of poetry as a sort of mirror of social conditions make the historical grounding particularly important. Much of traditional criticism seems to make the assumption that a poem is composed to register a social commentary on the contemporary scene, explicitly or implicitly, and that it is to be understood as such.

To recognize the significance of history in the Chinese literary tradition does not mean, however, that we should take a Chinese poem for a historical document and understand its discourse as a "strictly true" statement about the real world.[14] I would particularly challenge the misleading contrast between Western and Chinese poetry as fictional creation and historical documentation. History and reality can enter the world of poetry in many ways. Chinese poets are not alone in writing on the occasion of a specific moment in their lived experience, for Goethe also called his own works "occasional poems" (*Gelegenheitsgedicht*), to which "reality must give both impulse and material." He told Johann Peter Eckermann: "All my poems are occasioned poems, suggested by real life, and having therein a firm foundation. I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air."[15] According to Helen Vendler, the famous religious and spiritualist poet George Herbert wrote a kind of "private poetry" that usually begins "in experience, and aims at recreating or recalling that experience."[16] Whatever we may think of Goethe's self-description or Vendler's remarks on Herbert, and whatever difference we may find

between Goethe's occasional poems and, say, Du Fu's, we cannot claim that the connection of poetry with history and lived experience is uniquely Chinese. In the Western tradition itself, that connection has also an impressive presence.

Given the much-emphasized distinction between Western imaginative literature and the historical grounding of Chinese poetry, it may be necessary here to examine and recognize the significance of history in the Western literary tradition. If the shield of Achilles symbolizes the fictionality of Western poetry, we must not forget that there is another famous shield in Western literature, made by the same god of fire, as a conscious parallel to the one made for Achilles. I refer of course to the shield of Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*, a shield cast to symbolize a poetic vision of real history, an *ekphrasis* of historical prophecy. The design on this shield clearly presents Roman history from its legendary beginning in a she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus to Virgil's own time, the glory of the Roman Empire under Augustus. History is revealed on the shield:

> There the Lord of Fire
> Knowing the prophets, knowing the age to come,
> Had wrought the future story of Italy,
> The triumphs of the Romans: there one found
> The generations of Ascanius' heirs,
> The wars they fought, each one. (8.626-29)[17]

Compared with the Homeric epic, the *Aeneid* is thoroughly imbued with history. "The scope of the Greek epic falls short of the scope of the Roman *Aeneid*," as Viktor Pöschl remarks. "It was the Roman poet, Virgil, who discovered the grievous burden of history and its vital meaning. He was the first to perceive deeply the cost of historical greatness."[18] The cost here refers to the sacrifice of love and personal happiness, of the private, human interest that Aeneas must surrender for the sake of an impersonal, public cause, the historical mission of the founding of the Roman *imperium*. Much of the tragic pathos in the Virgilian epic derives from this conflict between the personal and the impersonal, the sacrifice of love for the achievement of a great empire. In reading the poem, the attentive reader will notice what Adam Parry calls the continual opposition of two voices, the voice of "the forces of history" and that of "human suffering."[19] It is interesting to note that time is presented in Virgil's epic on two levels, for what is described prophetically as the future destiny for Aeneas is the present historical time for Virgil and his readers, and Aeneas, having seen his future history depicted on the shield, is portrayed as "knowing nothing of the events themselves" (*rerumque ignarus*, 8.730). The prophetic scenes

on the shield are thus included, as Francis Cairns suggests, "more perhaps for the readers' enlightenment than for Aeneas', since they lie in his future and he is said not to comprehend them."[20] With the hindsight of history, Virgil's readers occupy a better position than Aeneas to understand the historical significance of the images carved on his shield, and in reading the *Aeneid*, they would have no difficulty to see Dido, the queen of Carthage, as prefiguring the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, and when the dying Dido utters her bitter curse and calls for an "avenging spirit" rising from her bones (*ex ossibus ultor*, 4.625), they would remember the awesome Carthaginian general Hannibal and the dangerous years of the Punic wars. That is to say, for the Roman readers the poem becomes, in the words of K. W. Gransden, "a prelude to history and to the understanding of history."[21] They would read the Virgilian epic as both historical and poetic, and the historical elements are absolutely essential to an adequate understanding of the *Aeneid* as poetry. From this we may understand that Western poetry is not severed from historical reality at all, but it has made history an essential part of poetic representation as well as an important assumption in reading and interpretation.

When we come back to examine the historical orientation of Chinese poetry, we may find some similarity to Virgil's historical concerns, even though Chinese poetry is mostly short and has little resemblance to the scope of the Roman epic. The difference is surely enormous, but the notion of history as the working out of some sort of a divine mandate, with its model already existent in a glorious antiquity, a past Golden Age, is at least in some ways common to both the *Aeneid* and the Chinese tradition. Under the influence of a Confucian idealization of antiquity, the Chinese poet tends to assess the present against a perfect beginning, the ideal past under ancient sage-kings. Confucius is especially fond of the customs and institutions of the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1122-256 BCE). "The Zhou is resplendent in culture, having before it the example of the two previous dynasties," says the Master. "I am for the Zhou" (周監於二代，郁郁乎文哉。吾從周).[22] Ancient sage-kings and rulers, Yao, Shun, and especially King Wen and the Duke of Zhou, figure prominently in the commentaries on the *Book of Poetry*, and in writing about the historical present, Chinese poets often nostalgically evoke the reign of sage-kings as a yardstick for measurement, a paradigm that sets up an unmatched and unmatchable example for the contemporary scene. When Du Fu described his youthful political ambition as "addressing my lord as Yao and Shun/To bring our mores and customs again to purity" (致君堯舜上，再使風俗淳), the allusion to sage-kings and a return to the purity of their times was more than a mere poetic convention, for it made use of a deeply entrenched sense of history to legitimize his political aspirations.[23] The reverence for ancient

sage-kings, the idealization of the remote past as the final point of reference in judging contemporary social conditions, constitute what might be called a retro-teleology of history, which in a sense predetermines the nostalgic mood of much of classical Chinese poetry that sees the present as always a falling-off from a better and more balanced past.

If we admit that Chinese poems are, by and large, occasional poems, and that the Chinese literary text is often embedded in the real historical context and continuous with the lived world, we still need to consider whether historical discourse in China is strictly factual, and whether Chinese readers past and present do read poetry as history and make no distinction in their expectations when reading the two kinds of texts. In a famous work of Chinese literary criticism, Liu Xie's 劉勰 (465?-522) *Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wenxin diaolong*文心雕龍), one chapter is devoted to the discussion of hyperbolic expressions. In such expressions, as Liu Xie notes, "though the language is excessive, the meaning is not misleading" (辭雖已甚，其義無害也).[24] That is to say, competent Chinese readers would not take poetic lines for factual statements, and that they would allow poets some kind of a license to exaggerate in order to make their expressions striking and effective. Historians, on the other hand, are not allowed such license and their credibility is called into question when their supposedly factual account seems to exceed the bounds of the probable. In reading the *Book of History*, Mencius 孟子 (371?-289? BCE) dismissed an obviously inflated description of a battle scene in which the blood shed in the war is said to flow like a river, capable of keeping wooden clubs afloat on the surface. "If one believed everything in the *Book of History*," says Mencius contemptuously of such improbable accounts of history, "it would have been better for the *Book* not to have existed at all" (盡信書，則不如無書).[25] And yet, when he talks with Xianqiu Meng 咸邱蒙 about the *Book of Poetry*, Mencius shows much more patience and sympathy, and rejects rigid literalism in reading poetic hyperboles. This is one of the important passages in *Mencius* that has had a tremendous influence on Chinese literary criticism. In commenting on how to interpret poems, Mencius said:

> Hence in explaining an ode, one should not allow the words to obscure the sentence, nor the sentence to obscure the intended meaning. The right way is to meet the intention of the poet with sympathetic understanding. If one were merely to take the sentence literally, then there is the ode *Yün han* which says,
>
> > Of the remaining multitudes of Chou
> > Not one single man survived.

> If this is taken to be literal truth, it would mean that not a single Chou subject survived.
>
> 故說詩者，不以文害辭，不以辭害志。以意逆志，是爲得之。如以辭而已矣，雲漢之詩曰：周餘黎民，靡有孑遺。信斯言也，是周無遺民也。[26]

Instead of demanding the *Book of Poetry* be discarded for overstatements, Mencius calls the reader's attention to metaphors and rhetorical devices that operate beyond the literal sense of the text, and he advocates a kind of historical sympathy that puts the text in its original context and understands a poem in accordance with the author's intention. His different attitudes toward the *Book of History* and the *Book of Poetry* indicate that Chinese readers clearly recognize the generic distinctions between history and poetry, and that they require strict plausibility of historical narratives but exempt poetry from such a requirement. Wang Chong 王充 (27-97?), a great scholar and philosopher of the first century, used the same two lines from *Yün han* to illustrate what he called "artistic exaggeration" (藝增) and made some apposite remarks. The poem was about a great drought in ancient time, he explains. "It may be true that the drought was severe, but to say that not a single person remained alive is mere exaggeration" (夫旱甚則有之矣；言無孑遺一人，增之也). Wealthy people with plenty of food supplies would certainly have survived the ordeal, but the poet used the hyperbole "to increase the effect of the text and to emphasize the severity of the drought" (增益其文，欲言旱甚也).[27] Wang Chong argued against all other kinds of exaggerations but tolerated the artistic one, which he considered justifiable if the rhetorical point was to augment the effect of the text and to embellish its message. Here again, a difference is made between poetic license and historical plausibility.

By gathering a wealth of textual evidence, Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 gives the most effective critique of the hackneyed notion of Chinese poetry as "history in verse," and he particularly calls our attention to the literary or even fictional side of historical narratives. Many dialogues and monologues in historical narratives cannot possibly have been recorded either by the historian himself or by anyone else. In *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 or *Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, for example, there was a record of private conversation between a man named Jie Zhitui 介之推 and his mother about retreating to hide themselves in a mountain, and another episode in which the historian recorded the words of a warrior named Chu Ni 鉏麑 before he committed suicide in a courtyard all by himself. These men's recorded speech, says Qian, "has neither witness when they were alive nor anyone to verify it when they are dead. Despite

the commentators' tortuous argument to stitch it together, readers could hardly set their minds at rest or stop voicing their doubts" (皆生無傍證、死無對證者。註家雖曲意彌縫，而讀者終不饜心息喙).[28] Chu Ni's last words before suicide have particularly left many readers wondering, as Li Yuandu 李元度 (1821-1887) asked, "who heard them and who recounted them?" (又誰聞而誰述之耶). But in reading Bo Juyi's 白居易 "Song of Everlasting Remorse" (*Changhen ge* 長恨歌), which also contains improbable reported speech, such questions do not seem to arise. In that famous work of poetic fantasy, a Taoist adept is sent to find the soul of the emperor's favorite consort and finally meets her in a land of fairies. As a token of the love of the emperor and, from the narrative point of view, as a strategy to give the land of fairies and immortals some sense of reality and credibility, the beautiful goddess, who had been incarnated as the royal consort when she sojourned in the human world, gives the Taoist her hairpin broken in half and tells him words that only she and the emperor could have known, words they had said to each other as a vow of love in the middle of the night in the privacy of the inner palace, when no one was around. In reading this, as Qian Zhongshu remarks, "no one seems to have asked dull-wittedly, 'who heard them and who recounted them?' Nor has anyone played the killjoy to accuse the 'Taoist from Linqiong' of lying" (似乎還沒有人死心眼的問「又誰聞而誰述之耶？」或者殺風景的指斥「臨邛道士」編造謊話).[29] Here again, historical and poetic texts are read in different ways with different expectations. It is therefore biased and untenable, as Qian argues, "to believe that poetry is all verifiable factual account while not to know the fictional embellishment in historical writing, or only to realize that poets use the same techniques as historians while not to understand the poetic quality of historiography" (於詩則概信爲徵獻之實錄，於史則不識有梢空之巧詞，祇知詩具史筆，不解史蘊文心).[30] The putative recorded speech of historical characters in *Zuo zhuan*, says Qian, is "in fact imagined speech or speech on behalf of the characters, which becomes, it is not too far-fetched to say, the antecedent of dialogues and dramatic speech in novels and plays of later times" (《左傳》記言而實乃擬言、代言，謂是後世小說、院本中對話、賓白之椎輪草創，未遽過也).[31] Rather than reading poetry as history, then, we should understand how historiography can itself be read, to some extent and in some ways, as imaginative literature.

The interrelationship between history and narrative fiction has often been discussed in the study of Chinese literature. Henri Maspero studied early Chinese historical romances built around some legendary or celebrated historical figures, and pointed out the often confused relations between such historical romance and historical biography. From King Mu 穆王, Chong'er 重耳 (later the Prince Wen of Jin), to Yan Ying 晏嬰, the

wise minister of Qi, and Su Qin 蘇秦, the famous rhetor and political councilor, there is hardly any well-known figure in Chinese antiquity that "has not become the hero of a romance. Imagination being given free rein, imaginary episodes were invented when the real biography seemed insufficient."[32] *Zuo zhuan* provides many examples of a careful rhetorical structure and poetic appeal. Although it is not a novel or historical romance and its description is kept to the minimum, its carefully selected events and speeches are arranged in such a way as to guide the reader always to a moral lesson about good and bad, about a benevolent ruler who is wise and kind or a tyrant who is obstinate and cruel. The moralistic and didactic interest of the narrative, as Ronald Egan observes, may explain why the actual process of historical events like the battle between Jin and Chu is described in a few words with no mentioning of the size, training, equipment, morale of the rival forces or any details of how the armies were deployed in the battle fields, while preliminary matters that implicitly predetermine the outcome in moral terms are given a fuller narration. "The emphasis throughout the narrative is on establishing the right and wrong of the situation and on distinguishing the just from the selfish leader," says Egan. "Once this has been done, the outcome of the battle is predictable, and there is a noticeable lack of interest in depicting the main event."[33] In *Zuo zhuan* as in Chinese historiography in general, as Anthony Yu also argues, one can detect "an attempt to weave a moral pattern wherein not only are the good and bad clearly distinguished but they are also 'encouraged or censured (*cheng'e quanshan*)' accordingly."[34] A moral pattern and didactic interest evidently govern both historical and fictional narratives in China. As Yu shows further, Chinese novels are much influenced by Chinese historical writing, since most novels seek to ground their invented action in dynastic history, and the "popular notion of karmic causality" assumes in novels a function similar to that of the moral pattern in Chinese chronicles, which seeks to explain the practical consequences of speech and action in social and political life. It is in the context of such a conventional historical grounding, Yu argues, that *Dream of the Red Chamber*, also known as *The Story of the Stone*, the acclaimed masterpiece of Chinese narrative fiction, stands out as a "sharp contrast to a different and rival mode of writing—history itself," because it consciously reflects on its own structural fictionality and deliberately locates its action outside an identifiable outline of dynastic history.[35]

But what about poetry, the kind of occasional poems that arise from particular historical moments and lived experiences? Are they really nonfictional and, as Owen puts it, able to be "read as describing historical moments and scenes actually present to the historical poet"?[36] In fact, Owen is far too knowledgeable a reader of classical Chinese poetry to accept the

kind of cultural dichotomy we find in some of his own theoretical formulations, and he himself has given a most thoughtful answer to that question. In an article on this particular issue, Owen seeks to put the "historicist" argument in question. "To put it bluntly," he says, "we never see the grounding of a literary text in its history; we see only the formal imitation of such grounding, the framing of the literary text within another text that pretends to be its historical ground, an 'account' of history."[37] Historical grounding turns out to be nothing more than constructing a context for a literary text out of other historical accounts, and the obvious circularity of such textual construction makes it difficult to substantiate any claim to historical truth or authenticity. Owen illustrates the point by analyzing a poem by Du Fu, "On Meeting Li Guinian in the South" (江南逢李龜年) in which the poet claims that he used to see the famous singer Li "so often in Prince Qi's house," and that he had heard him singing "several times in the hall of Cui Di" (岐王宅裏尋常見，崔九堂前幾度聞).[38] Some commentators have found that claim doubtful since both Li Fan 李範, the Prince of Qi, and Cui Di 崔滌, a palace chamberlain, died in the fourteenth year of the Kaiyuan reign when Du Fu was only a teenage boy. It was unlikely, they argue, though not impossible, that the young Du Fu could have frequented these noble houses and seen Li "so often" there in such social gatherings. Commenting on the debate about the reliability of Du Fu's claim, Owen implicitly rejects the notion that one should read a Chinese poem as though it were making "strictly true" statements about the poet's experience in the lived world. It is quite possible, Owen suggests, that Du Fu "might have misremembered, might have allowed his poetic vision of the K'ai-yüan and his own place in it to overwhelm a more sober memory of 'what really happened'." It is also possible that Du Fu might even have replaced reality with his desire in writing "myths of [his] childhood and youth." Although this is an occasional poem, Owen argues, "there is a world of difference between a poem's *generic* claim to be historically true and actually being historically true."[39] In effect, Owen throws serious doubt on the notion of Chinese poetry as unique and factual account of real experiences. In discussing the ambiguous and richly suggestive texts of Li Shangyin's 李商隱 poems, Owen explicitly defines what he calls the "poetic" elements in contradistinction to those that can only be called historical. If historical grounding consists in anchoring the poetic text in specific moments and locales and determinate relations, then the language of classical Chinese poetry clearly shows a tendency to move away from such anchoring, from historical and narrative specificity toward an elimination of functional words and an ellipsis of syntactic relations. What Chinese readers appreciate as *yunwei* 韻味 or the suggestive, lingering taste of the poetic is often something indeterminate and difficult to

pinpoint, outside the clearly marked boundaries of historical events. Though there is a generic presumption that the Chinese poem "grows out of and comments on a complete living historical ground," and though that presumption is "often strengthened by the increasing precision of occasional titles and prefaces," says Owen, "what sounded 'poetic' was the withholding of precisely those elements in the language which could provide relatively adequate determination of such a historical ground."[40] This particular essay on Chinese poetry and its historical grounding evidently makes a subtle and necessary revision of a notion advocated in Owen's own earlier works, the notion of Chinese poetry as "authentic presentations of historical experience." This is a most welcome revision, because that erroneous notion describes neither the textual condition of Chinese poetry nor the horizon of expectations in most Chinese readers' experiences.

History and poetry are all forms of representation and expression in language; they are forms of communication of truth or certain understanding of truth, or efforts at communicating lived experience and reality. It is in this sense that we may understand the concept of *guan*, the idea that poetry could be read as signs of the times, and be used to observe the social and moral conditions of a given age. The truth poetry articulates is a form of truth about human life, but not the mechanic copying of the minute details of life, so poetry is not a record of the quotidian particulars. It is in this sense that Aristotle considers poetry "a more philosophical and more serious thing than history," for history represents particulars, but poetry represents universals, namely, "the sort of thing that a certain kind of person may well say or do in accordance with probability or necessity."[41] Understood appropriately, what Confucius meant by *guan* or the cognitive function of poetry refers precisely to this capability of poetry to tell truth in a general or universal way, and this does not mean that Chinese poetry must be literally true and contain no elements of fictionality. On the other hand, insofar as history purports to reveal the truth of a historical process rather than just providing information about what actually happened, it is not so different from poetry in speaking about something universal through the particular. As historical narratives try to reconstruct something in the past, imagination plays an important role in the writing of history, and fictional elements are not, and indeed cannot, be completely excluded. History and poetry are not mutually exclusive, even though they are very different in significant ways. It is therefore important for us to understand history and poetry as forms of representation and expression, and to see them as closely related to one another in a complementary, rather than a dichotomous, relationship.

Endnotes

1. D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 145.
2. James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 109; Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Raymond Dawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 70.
3. Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1992), p. 212.
4. Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, *Lun yu zhengyi* 論語正義, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 2:289-90.
5. Here I am summarizing critical views found in such works as Stephen Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Pauline R. Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); and several books by François Jullien, from the earlier *La valeur allusive: Des catégories originales de l'interprétation poétique dans la tradition chinoise (Contribution à une réflexion sur l'altérité interculturelle)* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1985), to the more recent *Penser d'un Dehors (la Chine): Entretiens d'Extrême-Occident* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000).
6. G. R. F. Ferrari, "Plato and poetry," in George A. Kennedy, ed., *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 1, *Classical Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 98.
7. Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書, 12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 6:1708.
8. *Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, in Ruan Yuan 阮元, ed., *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980), 1:271.
9. Aristotle, *Poetics* 51b, in *Poetics, with the* Tractatus Coislinianus, *reconstruction of* Poetics II, *and the Fragments of the* On Poets, trans. Richard Janko (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 12.
10. Stephen Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, p. 57.
11. Stephen Owen, *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 67.
12. For a theoretical study of this poetic topos and the complexity of verbal and nonverbal representations, see Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
13. Lau, *The Analects*, xvii.9, p. 145.
14. This is a statement Owen made in his discussion of Chinese *shi* or

poetry: "In the Chinese literary tradition, a poem is usually presumed to be nonfictional: its statements are taken as strictly true. Meaning is not discovered by a metaphorical operation in which the words of the text point to Something Else. Instead, the empirical world signifies for the poet, and the poem makes that event manifest." (*Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, p. 34).

15. Johann Peter Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, trans. John Oxenford (London: Dent, 1970), p. 8.
16. Helen Vendler, *The Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 5.
17. I quote from Robert Fitzgerald's English translation of Virgil, *The Aeneid* (New York: Random House, 1981). The number of book and line refers to the Loeb edition of Virgil's original Latin text (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).
18. Viktor Pöschl, "Aeneas," in Harold Bloom, ed., *Modern Critical Interpretations: Virgil's Aeneid* (New York: Chelsea, 1987), p. 13.
19. Adam Parry, "The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid*," in Bloom, *Modern Critical Interpretations*, p. 72.
20. Francis Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 102.
21. Gransden, "War and Peace," in Bloom, *Modern Critical Interpretations*, p. 141.
22. Lau, *The Analects*, iii.14, p. 69.
23. Du Fu 杜甫, "Twenty Two Rhymes to His Excellency the Left Coadjutor Wei" 奉贈韋左丞丈二十二韻, in Qiu Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲 (fl. 1685), *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳注, 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 1:74.
24. Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, *Wenxin diaolong zhushi* 文心雕龍注釋 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1981), p. 404.
25. D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), VII.B.3, p. 194.
26. Ibid., V.A.4, p. 142.
27. Wang Chong 王充, *Lun heng* 論衡 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1974), p. 130.
28. Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, *Guan zhui bian* 管錐編, 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1986), 1:165. Jie Zhitui 介之推, who had followed Duke Wen of Jin for many years in exile, refused to take office when the Duke returned to rule over Jin. He had a conversation with his mother and then went to live in seclusion in Mianshan. See *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義, the 24th year of Duke Xi, 115a, in Ruan Yuan, *Shisan jing zhushu*, 2:1817. Chu Ni 鉏麑 was a warrior who, sent by

Duke Ling of Jin to murder a good minister Zhao Dun 趙盾, committed suicide to avoid killing a good man on the one hand and disobeying his orders on the other. See ibid., the 2nd year of Duke Xuan, 165a, 2:1867.

29. Qian Zhongshu, *Song shi xuanzhu* 宋詩選注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1982), p. 5, n. 1.
30. Qian Zhongshu, *Tan yi lu* 談藝錄, enlarged ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984), p. 363.
31. Qian Zhongshu, *Guan zhui bian*, 1:166.
32. Henri Maspero, *China in Antiquity*, trans. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), p. 360.
33. Ronald Egan, "Narratives in Tso chuan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 37 (Dec. 1977): 335.
34. Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 40.
35. Ibid., pp. 46, 52.
36. Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, p. 57.
37. Stephen Owen, "Poetry and Its Historical Ground," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 12 (Dec. 1990): 107-08.
38. Du Fu, in Qiu Zhao'ao, *Du shi xiangzhu* (*Du Fu's Poems with Detailed Annotations*), 5:2060.
39. Owen, "Poetry and Its Historical Ground," p. 109.
40. Owen, ibid., p. 111.
41. Aristotle, *Poetics* 51b, *Poetics* with the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, etc., p. 12.

66. See Xue, "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo," *Nü xuebao* 3 (August 15, 1898): 2a.
67. See "Classifying the Female West in Chinese."
68. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 4, 15a-b.
69. See Guo Tingyi 郭廷以 ed., *Jindai Zhongguo shishi rizhi* 近代中國史事日志, 2 vols. (Taibei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1963), 2:1372-1373.
70. See *Shijing* 詩經, "Wen wang" 文王, *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, in Ruan Yuan, ed., *Shisan jing zhushu*, *juan* 16, 1:503.
71. See Xue, "Huangpu tan guandeng ge" 黃埔灘觀燈歌, *Shiji*, *juan* 3, 11a-b.
72. Chen Yan et al., *Minhou xianzhi* 閩侯縣志, "Chen Jitong zhuan" 陳季同傳 (1933; Reprint, Taibei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1966), *juan* 69, 38a. Chen Jitong translated the "Liguo lü" 立國律 [Code of the nation], "Jijia lü" 齊家律 [Code of marriage], and "Baoguan lü" 報館律 [Code of journalism] from the Napoleonic Code and had them published on the various issues of the *Qiushi bao* 求是報 (English title: *The International Review*), edited by Chen Jitong, Chen Shoupeng, and Chen Yen, 12 issues, from September 30, 1897 to March 1898, Shanghai.
73. A representative of this group of gentry was the Director of the Shanghai Telegraph Bureau, Jing Yuanshan, who played a crucial role in the 1898 campaign for women's education, among many other reform operations. For his ideas about reform, see his *Nüxue jiyi chubian* and *Juyi chuji*.
74. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 4b-5b.
75. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 1b-2a.
76. Lao Lai and his wife were a recluse-couple of Chu in the Spring and Autumn period, farming in the Meng Mountain. The king of Chu came in person, inviting Lao Lai to serve the court. He agreed, and thus enraged his wife. See Liu Xiang, [*Gu*] *Lienü zhuan* [古]列女傳, "Chu Lao Lai qi" 楚老萊妻, *Congshu jicheng xinbian* ed., *juan* 2, 57a-58b.
77. Meng Guang was a homely girl. When newly married, she richly decorated herself in order to please her husband Liang Hong, only to disappoint Hong who had expected a plain but virtuous wife. Meng Guang thus changed into coarse clothing and they together lived in reclusion ever after. See ibid., "Liang Hong qi" 梁鴻妻, *juan* 8, 249a-b.
78. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 5b.
79. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 7b.
80. Ibid.
81. Xue highly praised Chen Jitong's personal qualities and his contribution to the nation and the people; see her "Ti Wu Zhiying

caoshu hengfu" 題吳芝英草書橫幅 (1905) (*Shiji*, *juan* 3, 6a-b), "Shanghai guo Jingru xionggong guzhai" 上海過敬如兄公故宅 (1907) (*Shiji*, *juan* 3, 14b), and "Jingru xionggong wushi shouchen zhengshi qi" 敬如兄公五十壽辰徵詩啓 (1900?) (*Wenji*, *juan* B, 12a-13b).

82. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 8b.
83. See Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444), *Shishuo xinyu* [*jianshu*] 世說新語 [箋疏], commentary by Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), chp. 19, episode 23, text proper and Yu Jiaxi's commentary, 2:694-695.
84. Such as a *Shishuo* episode in the chapter on "Huoni" 惑溺 : "Wang Rong's wife always addressed Rong with the familiar pronoun 'you' [*qing* 卿]. Rong said to her, 'For a wife to address her husband as "you" is disrespectful according to the rules of etiquette [*li* 禮]. Hereafter don't call me that again.' His wife replied, 'But I'm intimate with you and I love you, so I address you as "you." If I didn't address you as "you," who else would address you as "you"?' After that he always tolerated [this usage]" (35/6) (trans. by Richard B. Mather, *A New Account of Tales of the World* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976], 488). Yu Ying-shih suggests that the wife's remark, "If I didn't address you as 'you,' who else would address you as 'you'?" reveals a growing jealousy among Wei-Chin women as well as an increasing intimacy between husbands and wives. See his *Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun* (Taibei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1980), p. 346. See also my discussion of the Wei-Jin women in my book, *Spirit and Self in Medieval China: Shih-shuo hsin-yü and Its Legacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), chp. 4.
85. The phrase *linxia fengqi*, or the Bamboo Grove aura, characterizes a group of gentlemen, known to later periods as *Zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢, Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove, whose manner and spirit represent the most respected characteristics of the Wei-Jin gentry. As noted in Sun Sheng's *Chin Yangqiu* 晉陽秋: "At the time (ca. 260), the fame of the manner [of the Seven Worthies] was wafted everywhere within the seas. Even down to the present [ca. 350] people continue to intone it" (Liu Jun's 劉峻 [462-521] commentary to the *Shishuo xinyu*, Chapter 23, Episode 1; trans. Mather, 371). This phrase and the terms *xianyuan* and *guixiu* appeared in the following *Shishuo* episode and its chapter title, "Xianyuan," to depict two different kinds of Wei-Jin women: "Xie Xuan held his elder sister, Xie Daoyun, in extremely high regard, while Zhang Xuan constantly sang the praises of his younger sister, and wanted to match her against the other. A nun named Ji went to visit both the Zhang and Xie families. When people asked her which

was superior and which inferior, she replied, 'Lady Wang's (i.e., Xie Daoyun's) spirit and feelings are relaxed and sunny; she certainly has a Bamboo Grove aura (*linxia fengqi*). As for the wife of the Gu family (i.e., Zhang Xuan's sister), her pure heart gleams like jade; without a doubt she's the full flowering of the inner chamber (*guifang zhi xiu*)'" (19/30) (trans. based on Mather, *A New Account of Tales of the World*, 355). See also Yu Jiaxi's commentary on this episode. For a detailed discussion of this episode, see my book, *Spirit and Self of Medieval China*, chapter 4.

86. See Xue, "Xunü shi," No. 7 (*Shiji*, *juan* 2, 20a), and "Ti Huaxi nüshi Fushi jixue tu" 題花谿女士富士霽雪圖 (*Shiji*, *juan* 2, 18b).
87. See Jing Yuanshan, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 2a, 8b, 10a-b, 12a, 15b, 34a, 50b, 51b, etc.
88. For a detailed discussion, see my paper, "Classifying the Female West in Chinese."
89. See Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 4, 6b-7b.
90. Ibid, *juan* 2, 13a-16b.
91. Ibid, *juan* 2, 19a-21a.
92. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 13b.
93. Xue, "Youjian" 有見 (1897), *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 2a.
94. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 3, 6a-b.
95. Chen Shoupeng, "Preface to the *Daiyun lou yiji*," 1a.
96. Xue, *Wenji*, *juan* A, 8a.
97. See Xue Sihui 薛嗣徽, "Preface to the *Daiyun lou wenji*," 2b.
98. *Liji* 禮記, "Neize" 內則, in Ruan Yuan, ed., *Shisan jing zhushu*, 2: 1462.